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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit focuses on the Meiji period (1868-1912), a pivotal period in Japanese and world history. Each lesson in this unit uses art, literature, primary sources, or a combination to help students understand Japan's emerging sense of nationhood within the context of the rapid change taking place during this important period. Lessons explore Japan's modernization and emerging national identity from multiple social and economic perspectives within Japan during the Meiji period, with special attention to the role of artists in helping to shape and promote a national identity. Lessons include: (1) "Introduction to Meiji Japan"; (2) "The Meiji Restoration: Defining Government Goals and Policies"; (3) "Bunmei Kaika: The Role of Art in Promoting Government Policy"; (4) "The Meiji Constitution of 1889"; (5) "Education and National Identity"; (6) "Good Wife, Wise Mother: The Role of Women in Meiji Modernization"; (7) "Female Factory Workers and the 'Meiji Miracle'"; and (8) "Japan Takes a Bow on the World Stage: The 1893 World's Fair." The eight lessons build upon each other and may be used as a complete curriculum unit or used in combination with the textbook or other supplementary materials to enrich the study of this period in Japanese history. (EH)

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# Meiji Japan

## The Dynamics of National Change

SO 026 452

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## A Humanities Approach to Japanese History, Part II

**Social Science Education Consortium**
**Boulder, Colorado**

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# Meiji Japan:
# The Dynamics of National Change

## A Humanities Approach to Japanese History, Part II

by
Lynn Parisi, Sara Thompson, and Anne Stevens

Social Science Education Consortium
Boulder, Colorado
1995

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## ORDERING INFORMATION

This publication is the second of a three-part series entitled ***A Humanities Approach to Japanese History***. Other titles in the series include:

**Tokugawa Japan: The Great Peace and the Development of Urban Society (Part I)**
**Imperial Japan: Expansion and War (Part III)**

To order any one or all of the titles in this series, contact the Social Science Education Consortium, 3300 Mitchell Lane, Suite 240, Boulder, CO 80301-2296.

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# Introduction to the Unit

## A Humanities Approach to Japanese History

The study of other countries and their histories may be greatly enriched by a humanities approach which draws on the fields of literature, history, and art. The humanities reveal the values and beliefs that underlie social, political, and economic institutions. They provide a lens for looking at another culture in a way that develops multi-layered understandings. As Betty Bullard and Loretta Ryan have written:

> A people's values are expressed through many channels. In their literature—their novels, poems, plays, and essays—they portray life as they have come to experience it. Their fine arts—their drawings, paintings, and sculpture—tell us how a people actually *see* the world. Their music reveals what sounds their ears find most pleasing or most interesting; their architecture—their sense of form in space. And their written alphabet is an important clue to the depth and nature of their contacts with other peoples and cultures.[1]

In a speech to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in 1991, Harold M. Williams spoke of the link between the humanities and the development of historical and global perspectives essential to 21st-century citizenship:

> The arts define what we mean by civilization. They are part of the foundation and framework of our culture. As a universal language through which we can express our common aspirations, the arts are a channel to understanding and appreciating other cultures. . . .
>
> Art history opens the child's imagination to other eras and cultures. If students of the next century are to work and live productively side by side with others from different cultures, they must respect and appreciate cultural differences and, at the same time, discern what they share in common with other people.[2]
>
> Students with knowledge of a culture developed through the study of humanities not

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[1]Betty Bullard and Loretta Ryan, "Introduction: Global Perspectives Through Asian Experiences," *Intercom 89*, 1978, p. 2.

[2]Harold M. Williams, "The Language of Civilization: The Vital Role of Arts in Education." Remarks presented at the Plenary Meeting XXIV of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, October 1991, New York City.

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only will be better able to communicate with people from that culture but will better comprehend the institutions within which they live and work.

Between 1992 and 1994, the Social Science Education Consortium received funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a multi-unit curriculum designed to assist teachers in integrating a humanities approach into the teaching of Japanese history. This project, *A Humanities Approach to Japanese History*, was conducted in cooperation with the Denver Art Museum and consultants from national and regional Japan studies projects. The project resulted in the publication of three supplementary curriculum units suitable for use in high school and community college courses. The units are: *Tokugawa Japan: The Great Peace and the Development of Urban Society*; *Meiji Japan: The Dynamics of National Change*; and *Imperial Japan: Expansion and War.*

**Introduction to the Meiji Japan Unit**

What does it mean to be Japanese? How have Japanese people perceived and defined themselves and their nation through significant periods in modern history? These questions set the stage for a humanities approach to the study of Japanese history and provide the organizing theme for this unit and the three-part curriculum program.

This curriculum unit focuses on the Meiji period (1868-1912), a pivotal period in Japanese and world history. During this period, Japan embarked upon a program of massive and rapid economic, social, and political change. This change involved analysis, selection, and adaptation of both Western and traditional Japanese philosophies and systems and it enabled Japan, by the latter part of the period, to take a place in the world political arena.

Intrinsic to this transformation was the molding of a national identity. Some historians have emphasized that at the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868, the average Japanese had no identification with Japan as a nation, seeing himself or herself only as a member of a family, village, or perhaps a town or feudal domain. By the end of the Meiji period, however, the average Japanese had a strong sense of nationhood and national identity.

Each lesson in this unit uses art, literature, primary sources, or a combination to help students understand Japan's emerging sense of nationhood within the context of the rapid change and modernization taking place during this important period. Lessons explore Japan's modernization and emerging national identity from multiple social and economic perspectives within Japan during the Meiji period, with special attention to the role of artists in helping to shape and promote a national identity.

Lesson 1 introduces students to the scope of change during the period through an analysis of woodblock prints depicting late Tokugawa society (1850s-1860s), the arrival of U.S. Commodore Perry (1853), and late Meiji military campaigns (1890s-1900s). Using primary source documents, Lesson 2 introduces students to the broad scope of the Meiji government's program to achieve modernization and parity with Western nations.

Lessons 3 through 7 examine the role of the Meiji government in mobilizing different sectors of Japanese society to support the rapid social, political, and economic change necessary to achieve modernization. Within this context, Lesson 4 analyzes the European and Japanese influences on the Meiji Constitution of 1889. Lesson 5 offers students the opportunity to analyze the Imperial Rescript on Education and explore the role of government in the socialization process. Lessons 6 and 7 explore the crucial role women played in realizing government goals of modernization: Lesson 6 focuses on upper class women, while Lesson 7 examines the contributions made by female factory workers. In Lesson 8, students culminate their study of the Meiji period and the growth of national identity by examining Japan's official exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

The eight lessons build upon each other and may be used as a complete curriculum unit. Alternately, individual lessons may be used in combination with the textbook or other supplementary materials to enrich the study of this period in Japanese history.

**Unit Goals**

The three curriculum units in *A Humanities Approach to Japanese History* address the following common instructional goals.

Students will be able to:

- recognize and analyze art and literature as reflections of fundamental cultural values, belief systems, and social goals;
- appreciate the ways that a nation's art and literature reflect and respond to events and issues in that nation's political and social development;
- discuss the relationships and interaction among various parts of Japan's cultural life; and
- develop attitudes and skills that support multiple perspective-taking—the ability and willingness to consider issues from the viewpoints of different cultures and groups.

In addition to these shared goals, the *Meiji Japan* unit in this curriculum series addresses several specific instructional objectives. Through the completion of all or parts of this unit, students will be able to:

- evaluate domestic and foreign influences for change immediately preceding and during the Meiji period (1853-1912);
- identify and analyze conditions and components of Japan's social, economic, and political change during a critical period in that nation's modern history;

- define and discuss the development of a national identity—what it meant to be Japanese—during the Meiji period;
- develop an appreciation for several Japanese art forms;
- recognize the role of art and literature in reflecting and facilitating change in Meiji Japan; and
- analyze the attitudes and positions of several stakeholding groups in the Meiji modernization.



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# Teacher Notes

**Introductory essay**. The unit begins with a short essay providing an overview of significant events and trends of the period. This essay is designed to provide the teacher with essential background information before beginning the unit; it may also be assigned as an introductory reading for students.

**Lesson format**. The eight lessons in this unit follow a standard format. Each lesson provides a brief introduction, followed by a statement of learning objectives, a list of necessary materials, an approximate guide to class time required, a procedure section for teachers, and additional resources. Background readings, slide scripts, and answer keys for student activities are provided for each lesson following the procedure section. Student handouts conclude each lesson.

**Grade level/subject area**. This unit is designed for social studies, world history, Asian studies, or humanities courses at grades 10-12; it may be used effectively in introductory courses in community colleges as well.

**Handouts and slides**. Handouts and slides are identified by a lesson number and letter. For example, Handout 1A is the first handout in Lesson 1; Handout 4C is the third handout in Lesson 4.

**Answer keys/student responses**. In the procedure section of each lesson, possible student responses to discussion questions are written in italics. On handout answer keys, student responses are also in italics.

**Japanese names**. Following the Japanese practice, we have listed Japanese names in the text with the family name first, followed by given name. This is the reverse of the U.S. practice of given name first, followed by family name, e.g., ONO Yoko vs. John LENNON. In the case of citations and references to works published in English by Japanese authors, the author is cited in the order used by the publisher, which is generally English name order.

**Japanese terms**. In this unit, Japanese terms are italicized only the first time they appear in teacher materials and the first time they appear in student handouts, except in those instances when a term appears italicized in quotations, book excerpts, or book titles.

**Plurals**. In this unit, Japanese nouns are written the same in singular or plural form, as in Japanese grammar. For example, the term *samurai* may refer to one person or several. Meaning is evident from the verb and the context. Thus, "samurai were the warrior class in feudal Japan."

**Chinese terms**. Two systems of transliteration are used for Chinese words. The older is called Wade-Giles, after its two originators. The newer system, developed in the mid-20th century by the People's Republic of China for international use, is called *pinyin*. In this unit, Chinese terms are written in *pinyin* transliteration with the following exceptions.

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The *Analects of Confucius* are excerpted from the 1938 translation by Arthur Waley, which is considered to be the academic standard. Waley used the Wade-Giles system of transliteration. The names of Chinese Nationalist Party figures, including Chiang Kai-shek, are written in the transliteration used by the Republic of China on Taiwan.

**Pagination**. Handouts show the handout page number at top left, the unit page at center bottom.

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# Pronunciation Guide for Japanese Terms

**Vowels**

There are five vowel sounds in Japanese—a, i, u, e, o—which are pronounced as follows:

a as in aloud

i as a long e, as in bee

u as in rude

e as in pet

o as in old

Long marks, or macrons, over vowels indicate that the sound should be held for twice its normal duration. Within the text of this unit, we have included macrons for all necessary Japanese names and places, with the exception of place names or terms that are very familiar to the American reader such as Tokyo (Tōkyō), Kyoto (Kyōto), Osaka (Ōsaka), Hokkaido (Hokkaidō), and Shinto (Shintō).

**Consonants**

Consonants generally have the same sounds as in English. The letter "g" is always a hard sound, as in "good."

**Intonation**

Japanese words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable.

| **Japanese Names, Places, Terms Used in This Unit** | **Pronunciation** |
|---|---|
| *Adachi Ginkō* | Ah-dah-chee Geen-koh |
| *Ashikaga* | Ah-shee-kah-gah |
| *bakufu* | bah-koo-foo |
| *banzai* | bahnz-eye |
| *Bunmei Kaika* | Boon-may Kye-ka |
| *Bunroku* | Boon-roh-koo |
| *Bunsei* | Boon-say |



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| | |
|---|---|
| *cha-no-yu* | chah-noh-you |
| *Chikanobu* | Chee-kah-noh-boo |
| *Chōshū* | Choh-shoe |
| *daimyō* | dime-yoh |
| | |
| *Edo* | Eh-doh |
| *Fujiwara* | Foo-jee-wah-rah |
| *Fukoku Kyōhei* | Foo-koh-koo Kyoh-hay |
| *Fukuoka* | Foo-koo-oh-kah |
| *Fukuzawa Yukichi* | Foo-koo-zah-wah You-key-chee |
| *geisha* | gay-shah |
| *Genji* | Gen-jee |
| *Gifu* | Gee-foo |
| *Ginza* | Geen-zah |
| *Gōzō Tateno* | Goh-zoh Tah-tay-noh |
| | |
| *Hachijō-jima* | Ha-chee-joe-jee-ma |
| *hakama* | hah-kah-mah |
| *Haruko* | Hah-roo-koh |
| *Hida* | Hee-dah |
| *Hikone* | Hee-koh-nay |
| *Hiroshige* | Hero-shee-gay |
| *Hōden* | Hoh-den |
| *Hokkaidō* | Hohk-eye-doh |
| *Honshū* | Hohn-shoe |
| *Hyōgo* | Hyoh-goh |
| *Iemitsu* | Ee-ay-meetsu |
| *Ii Naosuke* | Ee Nah-oh-skay |
| *Ise* | Ee-say |
| *Ishimoto (Shidzue)* | Ee-shee-moh-toe (Sheed-zoo-eh) |
| *Itō Hirobumi* | Ee-toh He-ro-boo-mee |
| *Iwakura (Tomomi)* | Ee-wa-koo-rah (Toe-moe-mee) |
| *Iwashimizu* | Ee-wah-shee-mee-zoo |
| | |
| *Jingo* | Jin-go |
| *jinrikisha* | jean-reek-shah |
| *jōi* | joe-ee |
| | |
| *kabuki* | kah-boo-key |
| *Kanei* | Kah-nay |
| *Kaikoku* | Kye-koh-koo |
| *Kanagawa* | Kah-nah-gah-wah |
| *Kashima* | Kah-shee-mah |
| *Kawamura Sumiyoshi* | Kah-wah-moo-rah Sue-mee-yoh-shee |
| *Keichō* | Kay-choh |



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| | |
|---|---|
| *Kichō* | Key-choh |
| *Kido Takayoshi* | Key-doh Tah-kah-yoh-shee |
| *kimono* | kee-moh-noh |
| *Kōan* | Koh-ahn |
| *Kōfu* | Koh-foo |
| *Koikeri Torakichi* | Koh-ee-carry Toh-rah-kee-chee |
| *koku* | Koh-koo |
| *Kuniyoshi* | Koo-ni-yoh-shee |
| *Kuroda* | Koo-roh-dah |
| *Kyoto* | Kyoh-toe |
| *Kyūshū* | Kyu-shoe |
| | |
| *Matsudaira Aya* | Mah-tsoo-dye-rah Ah-yah |
| *Matsudaira Toshi* | Mah-tsoo-dye-rah Toh-shee |
| *Meiji* | May-jee |
| *Mori Kinnojō* | Moh-ree Keen-no-joe |
| *(Mt) Fuji* | Foo-jee |
| *Mutsuhito* | Moo-tsoo-hee-toe |
| *Nabeshima* | Nah-bay-shee-mah |
| *Nagasaki* | Nah-gah-sah-key |
| *Nagano* | Nah-gah-noh |
| *Nawa Kan* | Nah-wah Kahn |
| *Nikkō* | Nee-koh |
| *Nogi* | Noh-gee |
| *Nomugi* | Noh-moo-gee |
| | |
| *Ogasawara* | Oh-gah-sah-wah-rah |
| *Okakura Kakudzō* | Oh-kah-koo-rah Kah-koo-zoh |
| *Ōki Takatō* | Oh-key Tah-kah-toe |
| *Ōkubo Toshimichi* | Oh-koo-bow Tow-shee-mee-chee |
| *Onada* | Oh-nah-dah |
| *Ōsaka* | Oh-sah-kah |
| *Ōseki* | Oh-seh-key |
| *Ōshima* | Oh-shee-mah |
| *Owada Masako* | Oh-wah-dah Mah-sah-koh |
| *Ōyama* | Oh-yah-mah |
| | |
| *Sadako* | Sah-dah-koh |
| *Saga* | Sah-gah |
| *Saigō Tsugumichi* | Sigh-goh Tsoo-goo-mee-chee |
| *Saitama* | Sigh-tah-mah |
| *Sakai* | Sah-kye |
| *sake* | sah-kay |
| *Samejima* | Sah-may-jee-mah |
| *samurai* | sah-moo-rye |

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Sanjō Sanetomi* | Sahn-joe Sah-nay-toe-mee |
| *Satsuma* | Sah-tsoo-mah |
| *Shibata Hana* | Shee-bah-tah Ha-nah |
| *Shimazu Tame* | Shee-mah-zoo Tah-may |
| *Shimmin* | Shee-mean |
| *Shimoda* | Shee-moh-dah |
| *Shimonoseki* | Shee-moh-noh-seh-key |
| *Shinagawa Yajirō* | Shee-nah-gah-wa Yah-jee-roh |
| *Shinto* | Sheen-toe |
| *Shōgiku Kido-kōden* | Show-gee-koo Key-doh-koh-den |
| *Shokusan Kōgyō* | Show-koo-sahn Koh-gyoh |
| *shōgun* | show-goon |
| *Suruga* | Sue-roo-gah |
| | |
| *Taishō* | Tye-show |
| *Takamatsu* | Tah-kah-mah-tsooh |
| *Takayama* | Tah-kah-yah-mah |
| *Taniguchi Kiku* | Tah-nee-goo-chee Key-koo |
| *tatami* | tah-tah-mee |
| *Tokyo* | Toe-kyoh |
| *Tokugawa* | Toe-koo-gah-wah |
| *Tokugawa Nariaki* | Toe-koo-gah-wah Nah-ree-ah-key |
| *Tokugawa Raitei* | Toh-koo-gah-wah Rye-tay |
| *Tokugawa Tame* | Toe-koo-gah-wah Tah-may |
| *Tomioka* | Toh-mee-oh-kah |
| *Toyohara Kunichika* | Toe-yoh-hah-rah Koo-nee-chee-kah |
| *Tsuda Umeko* | Tsoo-dah Ooh-may-koh |
| *Tsukiji* | Skee-jee |
| | |
| *ukiyo-e* | oo-key-yoh-eh |
| *Uraga* | ooh-rah-gah |
| *Utagawa Yoshitora* | Ooh-tah-gah-wah Yoh-shee-toe-rah |
| *washi* | wah-shee |
| *Yamagato Aritomo* | Yah-mah-gah-toe Ah-ree-toe-moh |
| *Yamaguchi Masanao* | Yah-mah-goo-chee Mah-sah-nah-oh |
| *Yamamoto Jinsuke* | Yah-mah-moh-toe Jean-skay |
| *Yamasaki Ichi* | Yah-mah-sah-key Ee-chee |
| *Yokohama* | Yoh-koh-hah-mah |


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# Glossary

The following words appear in lessons throughout the Meiji Japan curriculum unit. In most cases, terms of Japanese origin are also defined within the context of specific lessons.

*Banzai*: a Japanese exclamation used as a rallying cry or exclamation of celebration.

*Bakufu*: the government of Tokugawa Japan, 1603-1867.

*Black ships*: U.S. steamships which entered Edo (Tokyo) Harbor in 1853; so called because of the billowing black steam produced by their engines.

*Bunmei Kaika*: translated as "Civilization and Enlightenment," this slogan was popularized by the Meiji government to encourage modernization and learning from the West.

*Daimyō*: the regional landholders/rulers in Tokugawa Japan. Under the Tokugawa government, daimyō controlled their regional domains, but were subservient to the central Tokugawa government.

*Edo*: the historical name for Tokyo, used until the beginning of the Meiji period, 1868.

*Filial piety*: respect for family and ancestors. Filial piety was highly valued in Confucian philosophy and in Japanese society.

*Fukoku Kyōhei*: translated as "Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army." This was one of three slogans popularized by the Meiji government to encourage modernization.

*Geisha*: traditional female entertainers providing singing, dancing, conversation, and companionship.

*Great Peace*: term used to characterize the Tokugawa period, 1603-1867, when Japan enjoyed domestic peace.

*Jōi*: a Japanese term meaning "to expel the barbarians." This term was applied to one school of thought on how to deal with the threat of Western powers who wanted to open Japan to trade in the late Tokugawa period, 1850s-1860s.

*Kabuki*: a classical theater of Japan. Kabuki began in the 1600s as a kind of variety show and became the most popular form of stage entertainment in the Tokugawa period.

*Kaikoku*: a Japanese term meaning "to open the country." This school of thought, the opposite of *jōi*, was embraced by many Japanese in the 1850s and '60s who believed that Japan must end its period of isolation and open itself to trade with the West.

*Koku*: a measurement unit for ship capacity equaling 10 cubic feet; also a measurement unit for rice equaling 5.12 U.S. bushels. In rice measurement, a koku was supposed to be enough rice to feed one person for one year.

*Meiji*: the title given to the Japanese emperor in 1868 to describe his reign. The term Meiji translates as "enlightened rule."

*Prefecture*: under the Meiji government, the traditional regional domains of daimyō were restructured into prefectures. Prefectures functioned much as states in the United States, but with fewer powers and less autonomy.

*Samurai*: the traditional warrior class in Japan. During the long peace of the Tokugawa period, the samurai class dropped its traditional warrior role and was transformed into the educated upper class elite within society. In Tokugawa Japan, samurai performed many of the bureaucratic tasks of government.

*Shōgun*: title of the national leader of Japan during the Tokugawa period, 1603-1867. In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu unified Japan. In 1603, he declared that the leader of his family would hold the hereditary title of shōgun.

*Shokusan Kōgyō*: translated as "Encourage Industry." This was one of the Meiji government's slogans to encourage modernization.

*Ukiyo-e*: the term ukiyo translates as "floating world;" ukiyo-e, as "pictures of the floating world." The floating world was a term used in Tokugawa Japan to describe the social world of leisure in urban Japan, including theater, the visual arts, and other entertainment. Either derived from it, or some scholars say simply connected to it, was an idea about the brief, fleeting nature of life and a "live for the moment" attitude.

*Unequal treaties*: the term applied to Japan's first treaties with Western nations in the late 1800s. These treaties were so named because they guaranteed numerous concessions to the foreign countries, with no reciprocal privileges for Japan.


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# Introductory Essay
# The Meiji Period in Japanese History, 1868-1912

In 1853, the United States sent naval ships to Japan carrying demands that Japan open its closed society to Western trade. The U.S. "black ships"—so called by the Japanese for the billowing black steam produced by their engines—posed an imminent technological and military threat and caused widespread panic among the Japanese people. The event helped set in motion a chain of events that eventually toppled the Tokugawa shogunate. In 1868, Emperor Mutsuhito was restored to symbolic leadership, ending more than 250 years of Tokugawa rule. The new emperor took the name Meiji, or "enlightened rule," to describe his reign. The Meiji period, 1868-1912, was an era of rapid industrialization and political, social, and economic change in Japan. When the U.S. ships arrived in 1853, few people could have imagined that in the next 60 years, Japan would transform itself from an isolated nation to a world power with a new sense of national identity.

**Background to the Meiji Restoration**

In 1603, the Tokugawa family solidified political control and unified Japan under a hereditary rulership. The Tokugawa rulers chose a course of isolation for Japan, closing its ports to trade and interference by other nations. For over 250 years, Japan was closed to virtually all contact with the outside world, except for ongoing, but limited, interaction with the Dutch, who maintained trade privileges with Japan throughout the period, and China.

The Tokugawa period was an era of lasting peace, during which domestic commerce flourished and cities and towns grew rapidly. At the same time, the official social class structure, which was designed to maintain the status quo, unravelled. The merchants, officially the lowest social class, gained in wealth and influence as trade grew; the highest status *samurai*, or hereditary warrior class, grew impoverished and sought government jobs as peaceful pursuits replaced the arts of war. While many samurai succeeded in new positions as government bureaucrats, a significant number of samurai could not find such employment. Without work and adequate income, these samurai constituted a body of restless, discontented people—potential supporters for political and social change by the end of the Tokugawa period.

**The Western Challenge and Fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate**

While Japan focused inward during the Tokugawa period, Western nations were developing trade routes and spheres of influence throughout much of the world. By the early 19th century, the United States and a number of European nations were actively seeking trade with Japan. In the 1840s, the Dutch warned the Japanese government to open voluntarily to international trade before being forced to open by a Western military power. Events taking place in China at that time served as a potent additional warning to Japan: in the 1840s and 1850s, Britain had defeated China in the Opium Wars; subsequent treaties negotiated by the Western powers took advantage of China's weak position to exact trade

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concessions and divide China into Western spheres of influence. Despite these warnings, the Tokugawa shōgun would not consider opening Japan to trade with the "barbarian" nations.

Intent on establishing trade with Japan, U.S. President Millard Fillmore sent Commodore Matthew Perry to that country in 1853 with a set of demands: Japan must open its ports to trade, allow whaling ships to use Japanese ports as supply bases, and provide aid to American sailors in distress. Perry would return in one year for Japan's response.

The crisis that Perry's demands provoked amplified weaknesses already beginning to erode the Tokugawa political system. During the 19th century, Tokugawa governmental expenses had increased while revenues had failed to keep pace. The land tax, a major source of income, had not been revised for over a century, meaning that revenues had not kept up with increased land productivity. As previously noted, strains among the social classes had developed as the official class structure no longer reflected the reality of the late Tokugawa period. The political system had become stagnant, frozen into place for more than 200 years by a hereditary system which allowed no room for the talented to rise to leadership. The samurai had not fought a major battle for more than 200 years; moreover, during its extended period of domestic peace and isolation, Japan had not needed and had not developed a military force capable of defending the nation against foreign attack. When the American ships arrived, the government was forced to deal with a dire threat: a defensive war against a Western power.

Rather than issue a response to the United States by itself, the shogunate took the unprecedented step of seeking advice from all the *daimyō*, powerful landlords with large regional domains. Many daimyō saw the shōgun's plea for help as a confession of weakness. When Perry returned in early 1854 with an intimidating force of eight warships, the shōgun gave in to all of the U.S. demands. The Kanagawa Treaty, signed in March 1854, opened two ports to U.S. ships and allowed for an American consular agent to reside in Shimoda, south of Edo. Similar treaties soon followed with England, France, and Russia, ending Japan's long period of seclusion. For the shogunate, the defeat was humiliating: the government had proven unable to stand up to the Western powers.

The U.S. government sent Townsend Harris to Japan in 1856 to seek additional concessions to Western trade and involvement. The shōgun again sought advice from the daimyō and the Imperial Court, hoping for their support in meeting the American demands. In 1858, the Harris Treaty was signed; it served as a model for similar treaties with England, France, and Russia in the ensuing weeks. These "unequal treaties," as they came to be known by the Japanese, opened numerous ports to trade with the West, and subjected Japan's economy to international interference by allowing Japan's tariffs to be set by foreign powers. The treaties also granted the right of extraterritoriality to foreign residents in Japan, meaning that non-Japanese would be subject to their own national laws, not those of Japan. The unequal treaties infringed on Japanese sovereignty, and became a rallying point for anti-shogunal forces within Japan.

## The Meiji Restoration

Throughout the foreign crisis, daimyō and samurai leaders in the domains disagreed over what course the government should take in dealing with the foreign threat. One faction, the conservatives, argued that the Japanese should revere the emperor and "expel the barbarians." The conservatives sought a return to the traditional, "purer" conditions of the early Tokugawa period—with the government enforcing the class structure, suppressing the merchant class, and limiting governmental extravagance. An opposing faction, the progressives, contended that returning to the feudal past was unrealistic; they argued that a commercial economy had developed in Japan, and that the merchant class should be taxed and all domains should become involved in commercial ventures to strengthen the nation's economy. A more radical element among this faction asserted that Japan should open its doors to foreign trade as a source of wealth, and allow importation of Western technology and science in order to strengthen the nation's industry and military and help it compete with foreign powers.

In the wake of the crisis, two domains emerged as challengers to the Tokugawa government's authority: the Satsuma, from southern Kyūshū, and Chōshū, from western Honshū. These two domains, originally rivals for national leadership, formed an alliance in 1866 to overthrow the government and restore political power to the emperor. Recognizing the threat to its power, the government sent forces to suppress the Chōshū troops. However, the Tokugawa forces were badly defeated, revealing the military weakness of the central government. When the shōgun resigned in November 1867 under pressure from the daimyō, armed forces of the Satsuma domain seized the imperial palace in Kyoto and announced the restoration of the emperor to power.

In the spring of 1868, the fifteen-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito arrived in Edo to serve as the head of a new Japanese government. Edo was renamed Tokyo ("eastern capital") in honor of the emperor's residence there. However, while the emperor was the titular head of the government, real power centered in a group of young samurai leaders who had engineered the new government. These new leaders surrounding the emperor, mostly samurai leaders from the Satsuma and Chōshū clans, set the following tasks for their government: (1) to develop military and economic power to protect Japan from further foreign threat; (2) to repeal the unequal treaties with foreign nations; and (3) to join the community of nations as an equal member.

## Nation Building

Among the first tasks of the Meiji government was the suppression of internal threats to its power. Several northern domains remained loyal to the shogunate. Meiji leaders developed a plan to eliminate daimyō control of domains throughout Japan. By 1872, they had created a new governmental unit, the prefecture, to replace the domain, and had appointed governors to enforce central government rule in the prefectures.

Once control of Japan had been secured, the Meiji leaders turned their attention to

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modernizing Japan's military, economic, educational, and political systems. The progressive faction among Japan's educated elite argued for bringing "civilization and enlightenment," or *Bunmei Kaika,* to Japan by borrowing and adapting Western ideas and practices. Fukuzawa Yukichi, an educator and writer, popularized the notion of Bunmei Kaika through books and journals in which he described Western education and lifestyles and offered a wealth of details about life in the United States and European countries. His writings helped foster a craze for Western products—food, clothing, music, furniture—throughout urban Japan in the 1870s and 1880s.

Another force in support of Bunmei Kaika were members of the Iwakura Mission, an official government delegation which returned to Japan in 1873 after two years of study abroad. The 107 men, all leading members of the Meiji government, had set out in 1871 in part to negotiate revision of the unequal treaties. The main objective of their trip, however, was fact-finding: observing government assemblies, courts, prisons, schools, factories, and mines in the United States and Europe to determine what was needed to build a strong nation. The group returned to Japan with a strong sense of optimism: Japan, they believed, could catch up with the West in a relatively short period of time. They also returned with the conviction that reforms must be comprehensive.

**Early Meiji Reforms**

The first two decades of the Meiji period saw remarkable changes throughout Japan as the government of young samurai mobilized all sectors of society toward achieving the goal of modernizing the nation. In 1872 the Meiji government abolished the class system, allowing freedom of social mobility and occupation for all Japanese people. The government also established the right to private land ownership, as well as the right to sell land and grow what one wished, thus providing an incentive to landowners to make land more productive. Two years later, the government instituted a land tax reform. The new tax was based on an assessment of all rice-growing land for its productivity. The tax was to be paid in cash, rather than in rice, as had been the case previously. With the new land tax, the government had established a stable source of revenues which could fund other modernization efforts. (The tax, which provided 80 percent of government income during the period, proved an enormous burden for land-owning farmers.)

The government played a vital role in developing Japan's financial and manufacturing infrastructures. It took the initiative in funding and developing modern transportation and communication systems, including roads, railroads, and postal and telegraph systems. The government brought in over 5,000 foreign experts in the 1870s to assist in Japan's industrialization effort. This decade saw a flurry of building projects, resulting in new shipyards, weapons arsenals, model factories, and technical schools, all initially funded by the government. Throughout the period, the government exhorted the Japanese people to support government programs and goals through public opinion campaigns, education, and so on.



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## Late Meiji Conservatism

During the early Meiji period, the ideal of Bunmei Kaika had permeated nearly every aspect of Japanese society, resulting in a modernized manufacturing sector, a public education system, a modern banking system, and unprecedented economic growth. The Meiji government had laid the foundation for a prosperous and strong nation. Then, in the late 1880s, the government turned to the goal of establishing a firm cultural and national identity for Japan. The desire for a strong sense of identity grew out of a growing concern among some Japanese that blind imitation of the West would cause Japan to lose its unique cultural heritage.

In February 1889, a modern, written constitution was presented to the people of Japan as a gift from the emperor. Its primary author, Itō Hirobumi, had patterned the Meiji Constitution in part after the constitutional monarchy of Germany. The Meiji Constitution combined aspects of European political thought and traditional Japanese political ideas. In it, the emperor emerged as an absolute, hereditary, and sacred monarch—the living symbol of the nation. In keeping with Japanese tradition, sovereignty resided not in the people, but in the emperor. The emperor controlled the armed forces and political and social life. The constitution granted the Japanese people limited rights, tempered by social responsibility and the higher goal of national welfare. Only the wealthy few among Japanese men were granted the right to vote.

The constitution was followed in 1890 by another conservative pronouncement, the Imperial Rescript on Education. This document, which school children were required to recite every day, emphasized loyalty, obedience, and sacrifice to the emperor and the nation. Issuance of the rescript signalled the government's intent to see education serve the needs of the state.

With a new constitution and government system in place, and after two decades of intense concentration on domestic affairs, Japan's leaders turned their attention to foreign matters. The establishment of constitutional government helped place Japan among the "civilized nations" in the eyes of Westerners, prompting a change in Japan's relations with the West. In July 1894, Japan successfully renegotiated most of the provisions of the unequal treaties with the Western nations. Within two weeks of signing new treaties with England and the other powers, Japan entered into a war with China over control of Korea.

## Late Meiji Imperialism

Japan had a number of motives for going to war. The Japanese government saw the strategic importance of Korea in Japan's future security. Russia, which had nearly completed building its Trans-Siberian Railroad, was seeking a warm-water port south of its rail terminus in Vladivostok; the Korean Peninsula looked inviting. Russian control of the peninsula, so close to Japan, might threaten Japan's security and independence. China, meanwhile, also sought control over Korea and sent forces there.

A second motive for Japanese interest in Korea was Japan's search for new markets for its growing output of manufactured goods. East Asia seemed the obvious choice: it was not industrialized, and the Western powers had not yet established their own trade monopolies there.

Finally, Japan was motivated by a sense of nationalism. In order to achieve the respect of Western powers, Japan needed to differentiate itself from China and the rest of Asia. Japan's desire for empire in the late Meiji period should be seen against a backdrop of Western imperialism in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere in the late 19th century. As previously noted, the Western powers had made inroads in China in the mid-19th century. By seeking an empire, Japan might be seen as a great power in its own right. A show of military force and the establishment of its own empire would prove Japan's right to membership among the world's great powers.

Competition between China and Japan over control of Korea had simmered for a number of years. When war broke out in 1894, the world expected China—a huge country with enormous resources—to win easily. Instead, Japan quickly defeated the Chinese army and navy. In the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, Japan became an imperialist power. It demanded and won: the independence of Korea; possession of the Liaodong Peninsula (which had been part of China), Taiwan, and the Pescadores Islands. Japan also won huge war reparations from China. The war, over in such a short time, was tremendously popular among the Japanese people and furthered the growth of national pride within Japan.

Japan's joy over victory was short-lived, however. In April 1895, Germany, Russia, and France demanded that Japan relinquish control of the Liaodong Peninsula in "the interests of peace in the East." The "Triple Intervention" by these three nations humiliated Japan and underscored that nation's diplomatic isolation and relative weakness among the world powers. When Russia subsequently grabbed the Korean Peninsula for itself in 1898, Japan rededicated itself to nationalist expansion. From 1895 through 1905, the Japanese government greatly expanded the army and navy; the effort was funded in part by China's war payments. During this period, Japan also strengthened its diplomatic ties, signing an alliance with England in 1902.

In February 1904, war broke out between Japan and Russia when Japanese ships attacked the Russian fleet. The attack marked the beginning of Japan's first war with a Western power. From the outset, Japan had the upper hand. On land, the fighting was fierce, with heavy casualties suffered by both sides. Japan eventually won two major battles at Port Arthur and Mukden, and then destroyed Russia's Baltic Fleet, which had sailed around the world to fight Japan's navy. Japan's victory astonished Western and non-Western nations alike; the image of a non-white people defeating the great nation of Russia sent shock waves around the world. The 1905 Portsmouth Treaty, presided over by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, recognized Japan's control of Korea and its status as a growing regional power. By 1910, Japan had formally annexed Korea and laid the groundwork for an empire in Asia.



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When the Meiji Emperor died in 1912, his funeral was attended by officials from all the major Western nations. During his reign, Japan had accomplished all that the Meiji leaders had set out to do. By the end of the Meiji era, Japan had transformed itself from an isolated country to a strong nation with a constitution, an industrialized economy, and a modern, powerful military. Japan had embarked on a quest for empire in Asia, and had won the recognition and admiration of the Western nations. By 1912, Japan was poised to play a significant role in world affairs as a regional power in Asia.

**Sources:**


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*Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983.

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# 1 Introduction to Meiji Japan

**Introduction**: In this inquiry activity, students view two sets of woodblock prints. The first set depicts the arrival of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry and the "black ships" in Edo (Tokyo) Bay in 1853 in the late Tokugawa period. The second set depicts Japanese military victories during the Sino-Japanese War, in the late Meiji period (1894-1895). Students analyze the prints to make hypotheses about the challenges to Japan created by the arrival of the Western powers, the goals that government leaders set for Japan during the last half of the 19th century, and Japan's success at meeting those goals by the close of the century. Through this activity, students begin to consider the organizing issue of this unit: how Japan came to define and embrace a national identity during the Meiji period.

**Objectives**: At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Hypothesize about Japanese attitudes towards the Western nations at the end of the Tokugawa period.
2. Identify challenges that faced Japan during the Meiji period.
3. Hypothesize about goals and policies of the Meiji government.
4. Examine art as a historical record and artifact.

**Materials**: Handout 1A; Slides 1A through 1K; slide projector and screen

**Time required**: 1/2 class period

**Procedure**:

1. To introduce the lesson, ask students to formulate a definition of personal identity. Questions to guide discussion might include the following: How do we as individuals try to define ourselves and convey that definition to others? Next, ask students to consider the concept of institutional identity—such as a school identity—or national identity. Does the United States have a national identity or national character? How would students describe it? What are the identifying characteristics of the United States? How do we see ourselves as a nation and what contributes to that national image?

2. Tell students that some historians have considered the Meiji period (1868-1912) to be extremely important in Japanese history because of the formation of a national identity.

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Some historians have stated that at the beginning of the Meiji period, the average Japanese had no identification with Japan as a nation. Rather, Japanese people saw themselves as members of a family, village, or perhaps a town or feudal domain. By the end of the Meiji period, however, an average Japanese had a strong sense of nationhood and national identity.

3. As an introduction to the unit on Meiji Japan, have the class spend a few minutes viewing and analyzing a set of woodblock prints from 19th-century Japan in order to develop a sense of the challenges Japan faced and the changes that country underwent during this important period. Slides 1A through 1G are woodblock prints depicting scenes of Japan around the time of Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in 1853. Others are prints which recounted for the Japanese public the arrival of Perry.

Show Slides 1A through 1H while reading from the slide script provided at the end of the procedure section, page 25. As students view the slides, ask them to jot down their observations about Japanese society and daily life on the retrieval chart, Handout 1A.

4. Discuss retrieval chart findings in class using the answer key provided on page 31. Additional discussion questions are provided below.

- How would students characterize Japanese society and Japan's economy at the end of the Tokugawa period? Did they see evidence of industrialization?

- Think about the mood created by the woodblock prints portraying Perry and Western steamships. What was the economic basis of Japanese society at that time? What evidence is there in the prints that the Japanese felt threatened by Perry and the "black ships"? Why would they feel threatened? Consider how the artists used color, design, and visual images as you try to answer these questions.

- In comparison to the West—specifically the United States—as represented by the "black ships," how did the Japanese see their country at the end of the Tokugawa period? What adjectives and phrases might describe Japan at the end of the Tokugawa period? Post these on the chalkboard and discuss.

5. Before moving on to the next set of slides, ask students to hypothesize about the challenges Japan faced at the end of the Tokugawa/beginning of the Meiji period. What goals do students think the leaders of the new Meiji government set for the nation in the immediate aftermath of Japan's encounters with Perry? *Students should be able to cite a need to industrialize and modernize, learn Western technology, and build military and naval power.*

6. Tell students that they will now jump ahead to the last decades of the Meiji period to look for evidence of change in that country. Explain that the class will view three slides which depict artists' renderings of Japanese military battles in the Sino-Japanese War. Explain that this war, occurring late in the Meiji period (1894-1895), was the first modern

military conflict for Japan. Japan was the aggressor in this war and won the war using a modernized national army and navy and modern military technology.

7. As you show Slides 1I, J, and K, discuss the following questions.

- What changes must have taken place in Japan during the 40-year period between Perry's arrival and the Sino-Japanese War? *Japan built a modern army and navy; it must have developed the industries to do so. Japan appears to have adopted some Western traits: the uniforms are Western in style.*

- Based on these woodblock prints of the Sino-Japanese War, how do you think the Japanese people saw their country by the end of the Meiji period? *Japan seems strong, powerful, militarily advanced, and in control.*

- Do you see any parallels between the images of the Japanese and Chinese in these prints and the images of the Americans and the Japanese in the Tokugawa period prints? *The woodblock prints of the Sino-Japanese War create an impression of national power, military might, technological advancement, and so on. Depictions of the Chinese in these prints create an impression of weakness, technological and military simplicity, and so on. The Chinese figures are "washed out" and colorless compared to the strong, colorful Japanese figures. The Chinese are onlookers, viewing the action from the sidelines, much as the Japanese are portrayed as the onlookers in the Tokugawa prints viewed earlier.*

8. Conclude the lesson by focusing on the unit theme of change and emerging national identity through the Meiji period.

- Focus students' attention on Slide 1F, "Japanese subjects view U.S. ships," and Slide 1J, "The great naval battle off Takushan." Ask students to comment on the changing image of Japan—the changing sense of national identity—in these two woodblock prints, one from the 1850s—the late Tokugawa period—and one from the 1890s—the late Meiji period. Students might also consider the equation of technology and military might with nationhood in both the Tokugawa and Meiji prints.

- Have students generate a list of adjectives and phrases which might have been part of a Japanese national identity by the end of the 1800s.

# Slide Script for Lesson 1

The first seven slides represent Japanese artists' depictions of Japanese life around the time of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in Edo Bay.

**Slide 1A: A water seller in urban Japan, Tokugawa period.** Describe the tools and level of technology depicted in this image.

*Suzuki Harunobu,* The Water Vendor *(c. 1770). Philadelphia Museum of Art. Given by Mrs. Anne Archbold.*

**Slide 1B: "Samurai in Action," by Kuniyoshi.** What is the samurai wearing? What kinds of weapons and armor do you see? What can you infer about types or levels of technology?

*From* The Book of the Samurai, *by Stephen R. Turnbull, Bison Books (1982).*

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**Slide 1C: Japanese daimyō traveling by palanquin.** This slide is a picture of a palanquin—a traditional conveyance used by regional landlords, called daimyō, and very high ranking samurai.

*Detail,* Fukuhime's Procession to Edo, *Edo period, early 19th century. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 31.1 x 1855.6 cm (12 x 730½in), The Tokugawa Art Museum.*

**Slide 1D: Urban scene in Tokugawa Japan.** In this woodblock print of an urban scene in Tokugawa Japan, look closely to identify clothing, vehicles, occupations, and building styles. What impressions of late-Tokugawa urban life does the viewer get from this image? How does the artist use color to create a mood about urban life?

*This image courtesy of the International Society for Educational Information, Inc., Tokyo.*

Before viewing the next slides in the series, what generalizations or hypotheses can you make about life in Tokugawa Japan in the 1800s? Now, let's look at slides of Japanese artists' depictions of the arrival of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry and his warships, which anchored in Edo Bay in 1853.



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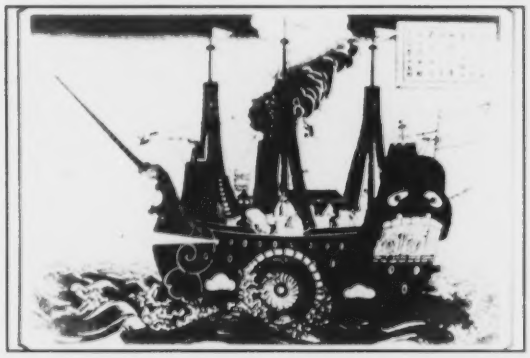
**Slide 1E: Artist's depiction of Dutch steamship, mid-1800s.** What does this image seem to convey about Japanese images and attitudes about the West? How has the artist portrayed the ship? What does the face on the bow of the ship connote? What appears to be protruding from the stern of the ship?



*From the Kanagawa Prefectural Museum, Yokohama, Japan.*

**Slide 1F: Japanese subjects view U.S. steamship in Edo Harbor, 1850s.** This woodblock print from the U.S. Library of Congress collection portrays two Japanese subjects viewing U.S. steamships in Edo Harbor, 1861. What inferences can you make about the feelings of the two Japanese subjects as they look at the ship? Think again about the issue of technology. What does the artist's rendering of the ship convey about his attitudes about foreign technology? Think about the composition of the print. Where is the power and/or action of the scene concentrated? What do you think the adult and child might be saying?

*Foreigner's ship: steamship, 1861. Color woodcut by Hiroshige II or III. Chadbourne Collection of Japanese Prints, Prints and Photographs Division, U.S. Library of Congress.*

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**Slide 1G: "Portrait of a High Official of the North American Republic."** Describe the artist's rendition of the official. What physical features stand out? Why do you think these features were emphasized? Generally, what is the demeanor of the official? What is the impression created by this image?

*An American Officer of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's expedition, probably Captain Joel Adams, c. 1854. Anonymous artist. Color woodcut. Chadbourne Collection of Japanese Prints, Prints and Photographs Division, U.S. Library of Congress.*

**Slide 1H: A "true portrait" of U.S. Commodore Perry.** In this Japanese artist's view of Commodore Perry, what physical features are prominent? What do you think were the artist's impressions of and feelings towards Perry based on this depiction?

*A "true portrait" of U.S. Commodore Perry from The Black Ship Scroll. Reprinted by permission of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.*

*Teacher note: The next three slides do not have accompanying script. Refer to the discussion questions in procedure step 7, page 23.*



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**Slide 1I: "Banzai! Banzai for the Great Japanese Empire!" by Toshikata.**

*Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. Peter Benoliel (funds contributed).*

**Slide 1J: A Great Naval Battle off Takushan: Admiral Kabayama Fights Furiously," by Chikanobu.**

*Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. Peter Benoliel (funds contributed).*

**Slide 1K: "Welcoming the Triumphant Japanese Army Returning from Asan," by Ginkō.**

*Philadelphia Museum of Art: Given by Mr. Peter Benoliel (funds contributed).*



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# Answer Key for Lesson 1

**Handout 1:**

| SLIDE | POSSIBLE IMPRESSIONS |
|---|---|
| 1A: a Japanese water vendor | *"low-tech;" primitive, simple tools, no vehicle for transportation; agricultural society* |
| 1B: samurai | *no guns; sword; simple armor, cumbersome, slow-looking; "low-tech"* |
| 1C: palanquin | *"low-tech;" human-powered vehicle, labor-intensive, simple clothes* |
| 1D: urban scene | *no vehicles, pedestrians only, wide streets, simple one-story shops, no industry* |
| 1E: Japanese artist's impression of Western steamship | *artist's drawing not accurate—must have been very unfamiliar; scary face on ship, fearsome* |
| 1F: Japanese onlookers view a "black ship" | *looks of awe, wonder, curiosity. Ship fearsome—billowing smoke* |
| 1G: Japanese portrait of a high official of the North American Republic | *scary looking; huge sword; huge nose, eyes, ears; intimidating* |
| 1H: Japanese artist's portrayal of Commodore Perry | *scary image, huge features, very hairy; doesn't look human* |

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# Retrieval Chart

For each image of Japan at the time of Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853 (Slides 1A through 1H), record information about society, ways of life, economy, occupation, standard of living, and degree of technology. Include your ideas about Japanese impressions of Perry and his steamships.

| SLIDE | IMPRESSIONS |
|---|---|
| 1A: a Japanese water vendor | |
| 1B: samurai | |
| 1C: palanquin | |
| 1D: urban scene | |
| 1E: Japanese artist's impression of Western steamship | |
| 1F: Japanese onlookers view a "black ship" | |
| 1G: Japanese portrait of a high official of the North American Republic | |
| 1H: Japanese artist's portrayal of Commodore Perry | |

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# 2 The Meiji Restoration: Defining Government Goals and Policies

**Introduction:** In the final days of the Tokugawa government and the early days of the Meiji Restoration, interactions with the West—particularly the United States—motivated and defined a policy of rapid modernization for Japan.

When the Emperor Meiji was restored as the symbolic head of government in 1868, political power was centered in the hands of a small clique of young court aristocrats and samurai. These politicians had played critical roles in the overthrow of the Tokugawa government. Once in power, they were determined that Japan should meet the challenge that the demands and threats of industrialized Western powers had created.

In this two-part activity, students continue to explore the development of a Japanese national identity, the organizing theme for this unit. In Part I of this activity, students work in groups to identify the nature of Japan's relationship with the West in the late Tokugawa-early Meiji period and to describe the challenges that Japanese statesmen saw for Japan if it were to be accepted as an equal with Western nations.

In Part II, students analyze primary source documents to identify the goals and policies that the Meiji leaders set for their nation in the late 19th century. Students will become familiar with several key slogans which the Meiji government used to promote national goals, policies, and ideologies of the period.

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Define and discuss Japan's unequal treaty relationships with Western nations at the beginning of the Meiji period.

2. Adopt Japanese perspectives to discuss the pros and cons of modernization and Westernization for Japan during this period.

3. Identify components of Meiji national policy to modernize Japan.

4. Analyze the effectiveness of popular slogans in mobilizing the nation to support rapid social, economic, and political change and in creating a sense of national purpose and identity.

**Materials:** Handouts 2A through 2H; posterboard and markers

**Time required:** 2 class periods plus homework

**Procedure:**

**Part I**

1. Set the stage for this lesson by emphasizing several key points about this period.

First, review with the class the challenges presented by the United States as reflected in Japanese woodblock prints marking the arrival of Commodore Perry. (See Lesson 1 in this unit.) *Students should be able to cite the United States' industrial and technological superiority as reflected in the United States' navy, steam-powered warships, weaponry, and so on.*

Remind students that Japan had been voluntarily cut off from outside influences through 250 years of the Tokugawa government. At a time when the long-lived Tokugawa government was beginning to weaken due to domestic social and economic changes, the arrival of Commodore Perry was seen as a serious threat to Japan's sovereignty.

The Japanese perception of this foreign threat was intensified by the knowledge that Western nations had overpowered a disorganized and technologically weak China. Japanese leaders were well aware that Western nations had defeated and humiliated China in the Opium Wars (1839-1842), forcing economic concessions and carving that country into spheres of influence.

Students need to know that Commodore Perry arrived in Edo Bay in 1853 with a fleet of four warships and a demand from the U.S. government that Japan open ports to U.S. trade. The Tokugawa government had no diplomatic mechanisms in place for dealing with foreign threats nor did it have an army which could adequately defend the country. The government turned to the *daimyō* (feudal lords) throughout the country to solicit advice on how best to respond to this foreign threat. Students will be focusing on this plea for help.

2. Distribute Handout 2A, letters from the daimyō to the *shōgun*, the head of the Tokugawa government. These letters reflect two conflicting opinions on how Japan should respond to the demands of the United States.

Divide the class into two groups, assigning one group to read letter #1 and the other group to read letter #2. In classes of 20 or more, it may be best to further subdivide the two groups and the two letters. In this case, ask each subgroup to read a portion of their assigned letter. Readings may be assigned as homework.

3. After students have read the assigned material individually, have students meet in their groups to clarify the key points of each feudal lord's arguments. Each group will pick one or two spokespersons who will present arguments aloud in class. This presentation may be designed as a role play, with the teacher playing the role of the Tokugawa shōgun.

4. When each side has presented its arguments, open the decision to class discussion.


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The following questions might guide discussion:

- What does the class see as the advantages and disadvantages of conceding to Perry's requests?
- What did Japan stand to gain or lose?
- Given the military power of the United States and the threat of the warships in the harbor, did Japan have a choice in the matter?
- How would the concession of ports to the United States—against the will of Japan—make the Japanese people feel?

5. Explain that Commodore Perry did not receive an answer to his demands in 1853 because of the disorganization of the Tokugawa government at that time. However, Perry returned to Japan in 1854, this time with eight warships. Threatened by this show of force, the Tokugawa government accepted a treaty with four provisions:

- Japan opened two ports to U.S. ships.
- Japan agreed to humane treatment of shipwrecked American sailors.
- Japan agreed to allow an American consul to reside in Japan.
- The U.S. was allowed most-favored nation trading status.

Fill students in on the aftermath of this treaty: Encouraged by the success of the U.S. negotiation, England, France, Russia, and the Netherlands soon concluded similar treaties with Japan. Within just a few years (1854-1858), more powerful Western nations had forced a weaker Japan to accept "unequal treaties." The treaties, establishing terms of trade and opening ports to foreigners, were termed "unequal" by the Japanese because Western nations dictated the terms and imposed trade conditions to their own advantage.

**Part II**

1. Write on the board the following slogans:

- *Bunmei Kaika*—Civilization and Enlightenment
- *Fukoku Kyōhei*—Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army
- *Shokusan Kōgyō*—Encourage Industry

Explain that the new Meiji government, established in 1868, was committed to meeting the challenges posed by the West and establishing Japan as a nation equal with

Western nations. This new government was led by young, forward-looking politicians. It set ambitious goals of **technological innovation**, **industrialization**, **reform of government**, and **reform of education**—goals that would put Japan on equal footing with the Western nations.

2. Explain that students will be working in small groups using primary source materials to explore ways in which the Meiji government set about to modernize Japan and gain equal status with the industrialized nations of the West.

- Have students form six small work groups. Provide each work group with one of the primary source documents, Handouts 2B through 2G. Groups should read their document carefully and analyze the goals and content by using the analysis sheet, Handout 2H.

3. Have groups share their findings in class, using the Handout 2H analysis sheet to guide discussion. Possible questions for classwide discussion are:

- What was the underlying motivation for many of the reforms the Meiji government wanted to undertake?

- What specific changes did the government want to accomplish in education, economy, social organization, diplomacy, and government?

4. To evaluate student learning from this activity, have work groups select one of the three Meiji slogans designed to encourage Japanese subjects to work toward modernization. Based on knowledge gained in this activity, each group should create a poster on the theme of one slogan. In creating their posters, students should incorporate their understanding of the challenges to Japan, the motivations for change, and the desired outcomes. Posters should be designed to encourage Japanese subjects of the 1870s to support government efforts to modernize. The posters should also reflect an image of the Japanese government's goal or vision of nationhood.



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# Debates Over the Opening of Japan

*Note: When Commodore Matthew Perry anchored off the shores of Japan in 1853, his action set off one of the greatest debates to occur in Tokugawa Japan. In an unprecedented move, the Tokugawa government—called the* Bakufu*—solicited the opinions of the feudal lords,* daimyō. *At issue were the policies of* jōi *(expelling the barbarians) and preserving a two-century-old tradition of Japanese isolation vs.* kaikoku *(opening the country) and giving in to foreign demands. In the background were such issues as the declining power of the Tokugawa government.*

*In the following selections, Tokugawa Nariaki, former Lord of Mito, represents the policy of jōi and Ii Naosuke, Lord of Hikone, represents the policy of kaikoku. While they started from different premises and arrived at differing conclusions, there were also some common denominators, such as the desire to preserve Japan's national power, and the realization that importation of Western guns and books was inevitable and necessary.*

**Letter #1: Tokugawa Nariaki to Bakufu, 14 August 1853**

Observations on coastal defense:

It is my belief that the first and most urgent of our tasks is for the Bakufu to make its choice between peace and war, and having determined its policy to pursue it unwaveringly thereafter. When we consider the respective advantages and disadvantages of war and peace, we find that if we put our trust in war, the whole country's morale will be increased and even if we sustain an initial defeat we will in the end expel the foreigner; while if we put our trust in peace, even though things may seem tranquil for a time, the morale of the country will be greatly lowered and we will come in the end to complete collapse. This has been amply demonstrated in the history of China and is a fact that men of intelligence, both past and present, have always known. . . . However, I propose to give here in outline the ten reasons why in my view we must never choose the policy of peace.

1. Although our country's territory is not extensive, foreigners both fear and respect us. That, after all, is because our resoluteness and military prowess have been clearly demonstrated to the world outside by such events as the conquest of Korea by the Empress Jingo in early ancient times; by the repulse of the Mongols in the Kōan period [1278-1288]

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Source: W. G. Beasley, *Selected Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 103-107 and 117-119. Reprinted with permission.

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during the middle ages; and in the recent past by the invasion of Korea in the Bunroku period [1592-1596] and the suppression of Christianity in the Keichō [1596-1615] and Kanei [1624-1644] periods. Despite this, the Americans who arrived recently, though fully aware of Bakufu's prohibition, entered Uraga displaying a white flag as a symbol of peace and insisted on presenting their written request. Moreover they entered Edo Bay, fired heavy guns in salute and even went so far as to conduct surveys without permission. They were arrogant and discourteous, their actions an outrage. Indeed, this was the greatest disgrace we have suffered since the dawn of our history. The saying is that if the enemy dictates terms in one's own capital, one's country is disgraced. The foreigners, having thus ignored our prohibition and penetrated our waters even to the vicinity of the capital, threatening us and making demands upon us, should it happen not only the Bakufu fails to expel them but also that it concludes an agreement in accordance with their requests, then I fear it would be impossible to maintain our national prestige. This is the first reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

2. The prohibition of Christianity is the first rule of the Tokugawa [government]. Public notices concerning it are posted everywhere, even to the remotest corner of every province. It is said that even so, during the Bunsei period [1818-1830], men have been executed for propagating this religion secretly in Osaka. The Bakufu can never ignore or overlook the evils of Christianity. Yet if the Americans are allowed to come again this religion will inevitably raise its head once more, however strict the prohibition; and this, I fear, is something we could never justify to the spirits of our ancestors. That is the second reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

3. To exchange our valuable articles like gold, silver, copper, and iron for useless foreign goods like woolens and satin is to incur great loss while acquiring not the smallest benefit. The best course of all would be for the Bakufu to put a stop to the trade with Holland. By contrast to open such valueless trade with others besides the Dutch would, I believe, inflict the greatest possible harm on our country. That is the third reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

4. For some years Russia, England, and others have sought trade with us, but the Bakufu has not permitted it. Should permission be granted to the Americans, on what ground would it be possible to refuse if Russia and the others [again] request it? That is the fourth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

5. It is widely stated that [apart from trade] the foreigners have no other evil designs and that if only the Bakufu will permit trade there will be no further difficulty. However, it is their practice first to seek a foothold by means of trade and then to go on to propagate Christianity and make other unreasonable demands. Thus we would be repeating the blunders of others, seen remotely in the Christianity incidents of the Kanei period

[1624-1644] and before [in Japan] and more recently in the Opium War in China. That is the fifth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

6. Though the Japanese scholars of Dutch studies may argue secretly that world conditions are much changed from what they were, Japan alone clinging to ideas of seclusion in isolation amidst the seas, that this is a constant source of danger to us and that our best course would therefore be to communicate with foreign countries and open an extensive trade; yet, to my mind, if the people of Japan stand firmly united, if we complete our military preparations and return to the state of society that existed before the middle ages [when the emperor ruled the country directly], then we will even be able to go out against foreign countries and spread abroad our fame and prestige. But if we open trade at the demand of the foreigners, for no better reason than that, our habits today being those of peace and indolence, men have shown fear merely at the coming of a handful of foreign warships, then it would truly be a vain illusion to think of evolving any long-range plan for going out against foreign countries. That is the sixth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

7. . . . . If we ignore the fact that the foreigners went so far as to enter Edo [Tokyo] Bay and carry out surveys without permission, if we do not take action to expel them, this will be to allow the men of all provinces to exhaust themselves in activity that is but vain and wasted effort, and in the end our people will be brought to a state of complete collapse. That is the seventh reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

8. When Kuroda [lord of Fukuoka] and Nabeshima [lord of Saga] were made responsible for the coast defense of Nagasaki it was not intended that this be directed solely against the Dutch and Chinese. It was a measure directed against all foreigners. But by agreeing to receive written requests from the foreigners at Uraga—and still more were the Bakufu to conclude an agreement there in accordance with those requests—would we not, as it were, be allowing the foreigners to enter by the back door, thus rendering futile the guard-duties entrusted to those two families and arousing their resentment? That is the eighth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

9. I hear that all, even though they be commoners, who have witnessed the recent actions of the foreigners, think them abominable; and if the Bakufu does not expel these insolent foreigners root and branch there may be some who will complain in secret; asking to what purpose have been all the preparations of gun-emplacements. It is inevitable that men should think in this way when they have seen how arrogantly the foreigners acted at Uraga. That, I believe, is because even the humblest are conscious of the debt they owe their country, and it is indeed a promising sign. Since even ignorant commoners are talking in this way, I fear that if the Bakufu does not decide to carry out expulsion, if its handling of the matter shows nothing but excess of leniency and appeasement of the foreigners, then the

lower orders may fail to understand its ideas and hence opposition might arise from evil men who have lost their respect for Bakufu authority. It might even be that Bakufu control of the great lords would itself be endangered. That is the ninth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

10. There are those who say that since the expulsion of foreigners is the ancient law of the Shōgun's ancestors, the Bakufu has in fact always been firmly resolved to fight, but that even so one must recognize that peace has now lasted so long our armaments are inadequate, and one cannot therefore tell what harm might be done if we too recklessly arouse the anger of the foreigners. In that event, they say, the Bakufu would be forced to conclude a peace settlement and so its prestige would suffer still further damage. Hence [it is argued], the Bakufu should show itself compliant at this time and should placate the foreigners, meanwhile exerting all its efforts in military preparations, so that when these preparations have been completed it can more strictly enforce the ancient laws. This argument sounds reasonable enough. . . .

. . . Some take matters very seriously while foreign ships are actually at anchor here, but once the ships leave and orders are given for them to revert to normal, they all relax once more into idleness and immediately disperse the military equipment which they had hurriedly assembled. It is just as if, regardless of the fire burning beneath the floor of one's house, one neglected all fire-fighting precautions. Indeed, it shows a shameful spirit. I therefore believe that if there be any sign of the Bakufu pursuing the policy of peace, morale will never rise though preparations be pressed forward daily; and the gun-batteries and other preparations made will accordingly be so much ornament, never put to effective use. But if the Bakufu, now and henceforward, shows itself resolute for expulsion, the immediate effect will be to increase ten-fold the morale of the country and to bring about the completion of military preparations without even the necessity for issuing orders. Hesitant as I am to say so, only by so doing will the Shōgun be able to fulfill his "barbarian-expelling" duty and unite the men of every province in carrying out their proper military functions. That is the tenth reason why we must never choose the policy of peace, and it is by far the most urgent and important of them all.

I have tried to explain above in general terms the relative advantages and disadvantages of the war and peace policies. However, this [policy I recommend] is something that is easy to understand but difficult to carry out. In these feeble days men tend to cling to peace; they are not fond of defending their country by war. They slander those of us who are determined to fight, calling us lovers of war, men who enjoy conflict. If matters become desperate they might, in their enormous folly, try to overthrow those of us who are determined to fight, offering excuses to the enemy and concluding a peace agreement with him. They would thus in the end bring total destruction upon us. In view of our country's tradition of military courage, however, it is probable that once the Bakufu has taken a firm


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decision we shall find no such cowards among us. But good advice is as hard to accept as good medicine is unpleasing to the palate. A temporizing and time-serving policy is the one easiest for me to adopt. It is therefore my belief that in this question of coastal defence [*sic*] it is of the first importance that the Bakufu pay due heed [to these matters] and that having once reached a decision it should never waver from it thereafter. . . .

**Letter #2: Ii Naosuke to Bakufu, 1 October 1853**

Before the year 1635 there were nine government-licensed trading vessels belonging to Nagasaki, Sakai, Kyoto, etc., but with the prohibition of Christianity in the time of the Shōgun Iemitsu, the Bakufu put an end to the voyages of these nine ships and laid down laws closing the country. Commerce was entirely limited to the Dutch and Chinese, no others being allowed to participate in it. Careful consideration of conditions as they are today, however, leads me to believe that despite the constant differences and debates into which men of patriotism and foresight have been led in recent years by their perception of the danger of foreign aggression, it is impossible in the crisis we now face to ensure the safety and tranquillity of our country merely by an insistence on the seclusion laws as we did in former times.

Moreover, time is essential if we are to complete our coast defenses. Since 1609, when warships of over 500 *koku** were forbidden, we have had no warships capable of opposing foreign attack on our coasts with heavy guns. Thus I am much afraid that were the foreigners now to seize as bases such outlying islands as Hachijō-jima and Ōshima, it would be impossible for us to remain inactive, though without warships we should have no effective means of driving them off.

There is a saying that when one is besieged in a castle, to raise the drawbridge is to imprison oneself and make it impossible to hold out indefinitely; and again, that when opposing forces face each other across a river, victory is obtained by those who cross the river and attack. It seems clear throughout history that he who takes action is in a position to advance, while he who remains inactive must retreat. Even though the Shōgun's ancestors set up seclusion laws, they left the Dutch and Chinese to act as a bridge [to the outside world]. Might not this bridge now be of advantage to us in handling foreign affairs, providing us with the means whereby we may for a time avert the outbreak of hostilities and then, after some time has elapsed, gain a complete victory?

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*koku—as a measurement unit for ship capacity, a koku equaled 10 cubic feet.

I understand that the coal for which the Americans have expressed a desire is to be found in quantity in Kyūshū. We should first tell them, as a matter of expediency, that we also have need of coal, but that should their need of it arise urgently and unexpectedly during a voyage, they may ask for coal at Nagasaki and if we have any to spare we will provide it. Nor will we grudge them wood and water. As for foodstuffs, the supply varies from province to province, but we can agree to provide food for the shipwrecked and unfortunate. Again, we can tell them, of recent years we have treated kindly those wrecked on our coasts and have sent them all home. There is no need for further discussion of this subject, and all requests concerning it should be made through the Dutch.

Then, too, there is the question of trade. Although there is a national prohibition of it, conditions are not the same as they were. The exchange of goods is a universal practice. This we should explain to the spirits of our ancestors. And we should then tell the foreigners that we mean in the future to send trading vessels to the Dutch company's factory at Batavia to engage in trade; that we will allocate some of our trading goods to America, some to Russia, and so on, using the Dutch to trade for us as our agents; but that there will be a delay of one or two years because we must [first] construct new ships for these voyages. By replying in this way we will take the Americans by surprise in offering to treat them generally in the same way as the Dutch.

We must revive the licensed trading vessels that existed before the Kanei period [1624-1644], ordering the rich merchants of such places as Osaka, Hyōgo, and Sakai to take shares in the enterprise. We must construct new steamships, especially powerful warships, and these we will load with goods not needed in Japan. For a time we have to employ Dutchmen as masters and mariners, but we will put on board with them Japanese of ability and integrity who must study the use of large guns, the handling of ships, and the rules of navigation. Openly these will be called merchant vessels, but they will in fact have the secret purpose of training a navy. As we increase the number of ships and our mastery of technique, Japanese will be able to sail the oceans freely and gain direct knowledge of conditions abroad without relying on the secret reports of the Dutch. Thus we will eventually complete the organization of a navy.

Moreover, we must shake off the panic and apprehensions that have beset us and abandon our habits of luxury and wasteful spending. Our defenses thus strengthened, and all being arranged at home, we can act so as to make our courage and prestige resound beyond the seas. By so doing, we will not in the future be imprisoning ourselves; indeed, we will be able, I believe, so to accomplish matters at home and abroad as to achieve national security. Forestalling the foreigners in this way, I believe, is the best method of ensuring that the Bakufu will at some future time find opportunity to reimpose its ban and forbid foreigners to come to Japan, as was done in the Kanei period. Moreover, it would make possible the strictest prohibition of Christianity. And since I understand that the Americans and Russians


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themselves have only recently become skilled in navigation, I do not see how the people of our country, who are clever and quick-witted, should prove inferior to Westerners if we begin training at once.

The national situation being what it is, if the Bakufu protects our coasts peacefully without bringing upon us permanent foreign difficulties, then even if that entails complete or partial change in the laws of our ancestors I do not believe such action could really be regarded as contrary to the wishes of those ancestors. However, I think it is essential to win the support of the country for Bakufu policy on this occasion, so the Bakufu should first notify the [Imperial] Court and then arrange to send Imperial messengers to the Ise, Iwashimizu, and Kashima shrines and a Tokugawa messenger to the Nikkō shrine, announcing there its resolve to secure tranquillity at home and security for the country. Trust in the will of the gods, after all, is the ancient custom of our land; and I believe, moreover, that by so doing the Bakufu may be able to unite national opinion.

It is now no easy matter, by means of orders concerning the defense of Edo and the nearby coast, to ensure that all will be fully prepared for any sudden emergency, so not a moment must be wasted. However many firm walls we construct, they will certainly not be as effective as unity of mind if the unforeseen happens. The urgent task of the moment, therefore, is for the Bakufu to resolve on relieving the nation's anxieties and issue the appropriate orders.

I am conscious of my temerity in putting forward views that conflict with the existing [seclusion] laws, but I have so reported in accordance with your orders that I was to do so fully and without reserve.



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# The Charter Oath of 1868

*Note: The Charter Oath of 1868 was written by several young advisors to the new Emperor Meiji. The Oath established the progressive goals and ideology of the new government. The Charter Oath was formally issued by the emperor in April 1868.*

By this oath we set up as our aim the establishment of the national weal on a broad basis and the framing of a constitution and laws.

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.

2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.

3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.

4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.

5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

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Source: Ryusaku Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume II*, p. 136.
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# Ōkubo Toshimichi's Opinion on Encouragement of Industries, 1874

Generally speaking, the strength or weakness of a country is dependent on the wealth or poverty of its people, and the people's wealth or poverty derives from the amount of available products. The diligence of the people is a major factor in determining the amount of products available, but in the final analysis, it can all be traced to the guidance and encouragement given by the government and its officials. . . .

We have come to a point where all the internal conflicts have ceased, and the people can now enjoy peace and can securely engage in their respective callings. This is the most opportune time for the government and its officials to adopt a protective policy which has as its goal the enhancement of people's livelihood. . . .

Anyone who is responsible for a nation or its people must give careful consideration to the matters which can enhance the livelihood of the people, including the benefits to be gained from industrial production and the convenience derived from maritime and land transportation. He must set up a system suitable to the country's natural features and convention, taking into account the characteristics and intelligence of its people. Once that system is established it must be made the pivot of the country's administrative policies. Those industries which are already developed must be preserved, and those which are not in existence must be brought into being.

An example can be found in England which is a very small country. However, she is an island nation and has excellent harbors. She is also richly endowed with mineral resources. Her government and its officials have considered it the greatest fulfillment of their duties when they have made full use of their natural advantages, and have brought about maximum [industrial] development. In this endeavor the Queen and her subjects have put together their ingenuity and created an unprecedented maritime law in order to monopolize the maritime transportation of the world and to enhance her national industries. . . . In this way her industries have prospered, and there has always been a surplus after providing the necessary commodities to her people. . . .

It is true that time, location, natural features and convention are not the same for each country, and one must not always be dazzled by the accomplishments of England and seek to

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Source: David John Lu, *Sources of Japanese History, Volume 2*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974, pp. 48-49. Reprinted with permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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imitate her blindly. . . . However, our topography and natural conditions show similarities to those of England. What differs most is the feebleness in the temperament of our people. It is the responsibility of those who are in the administrative positions in the government to guide and importune those who are weak in spirit to work diligently in the industries and to endure them.

Your subject respectfully recommends that a clear-cut plan be established to find the natural advantages we enjoy, to measure the amount by which production can be increased, and to determine the priorities under which industries may be encouraged [e.g., subsidized]. It is further recommended that the characteristics of our people and the degree of their intelligence may be taken into account in establishing legislation aimed at encouraging development of industries. Let there not be a person who is derelict in performing his work. Let there not be a fear of anyone unable to have his occupation. If these goals can be attained the people can reach a position of adequate wealth. If the people are adequately wealthy, it follows naturally that the country will become strong and wealthy. . . . If so, it will not be difficult for us to compete effectively against major powers. This has always been your subject's sincere desire. He is even more convinced of the necessity of its implementation today, and is therefore submitting humbly his recommendations for Your Majesty's august decision.



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# An Opinion on Education, 1872

As your subject reflects on the matter of education, he discovers that behind the wealth, power, security and well-being of a nation there lies invariably an advance in the talents of a civilized people. Therefore it is necessary to build schools and establish educational methods which enable us to attain similar goals. It is recommended that educational laws and regulations be uniformly established to eliminate useless miscellaneous studies. In their place there shall be created an educational system consisting of universities, middle schools and primary schools, and a trend toward the development of arts shall be introduced. To attain these goals, we shall adopt the best educational law in the world, and take into account the facilities available in and out of the country. The country shall be divided into seven or eight educational regions which will be formulated on the basis of population and land area. In each of these regions, there shall be a university, and a number of middle schools and grade schools. Furthermore there shall be established a detailed system of inspection to make it certain that the standards will not be violated. As to the admission, the wealthy and the poor shall be differentiated, and there shall be no indiscriminate acceptance of pupils and students. As to the order of implementation, all the existing educational systems shall be abolished, and a new law and regulations be established. New textbooks shall be issued, and new educational materials be supplied. The method of teaching as well as the regulations governing those who receive instruction shall be newly formulated. Once the above described regulations come into effect, even village schools and private schools shall be governed by their provisions. Detailed recommendations will be submitted at a later date. . . .

February 12, 1872 Minister of Education, Ōki Takatō

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Source: David John Lu, *Sources of Japanese History, Volume 2.* New York: McGraw-Hill 1974, pp. 49-50. Reprinted with permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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# Emperor Meiji's Letter to President Grant on the Iwakura Mission, 1871

*Note: The Iwakura Mission was the new Meiji government's first official diplomatic mission to Europe and the United States. A primary goal of the mission was to begin the process of establishing Japan as an equal to Western nations and reversing the unequal treaties. Although this goal was not realized, the Meiji government leaders who went on the Iwakura mission were exposed to the technology, industry, and customs of Western countries. They returned to Japan with a commitment to modernizing their own country.*

Mutsuhito, Emperor of Japan, etc., to the President of the United States of America, our good brother and faithful friend, greeting:

Mr. President: Whereas since our accession by the blessing of heaven to the sacred throne on which our ancestors reigned from time immemorial, we have not dispatched any embassy to the Courts and Governments of friendly countries. We have thought fit to select our trusted and honored minister, Iwakura Tomomi, the Junior Prime Minister, as Ambassador Extraordinary and have associated with him Kido Takayoshi, member of the Privy Council; Ōkubo Toshimichi, Minister of Finance; Itō Hirobumi, Acting Minister of Public Works; and Yamaguchi Masanao, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Associate Ambassadors Extraordinary, and invested them with full powers to proceed to the Government of the United States, as well as to other Governments, in order to declare our cordial friendship, and to place the peaceful relations between our respective nations on a firmer and broader basis.

The period for revising the treaties now existing between ourselves and the United States is less than one year distant. We expect and intend to reform and improve the same so as to stand upon a similar footing with the most enlightened nations, and to attain the full development of public rights and interest. The civilization and institutions of Japan are so different from those of other countries that we cannot expect to reach the declared end at once.

It is our purpose to select from the various institutions prevailing among enlightened nations such as are best suited to our present conditions, and adapt them in gradual reforms and improvements of our policy and customs so as to be upon an equality with them. With

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Source: David John Lu, *Sources of Japanese History, Volume 2*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974, pp. 51-52. Reprinted with permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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this object we desire to fully disclose to the United States Government the condition of affairs in our Empire, and to consult upon the means of giving greater efficiency to our institutions at present and in the future, and as soon as the said Embassy returns home we will consider the revision of the treaties and accomplish what we have expected and intended.

The Ministers who compose this Embassy have our confidence and due regard, and we earnestly pray for your continued health and happiness, and for the peace and prosperity of your great Republic.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hand and the great seal of our Empire, at our palace in the city of Tokyo, this fourth day of eleventh month, of fourth year of Meiji.

Your affectionate brother and friend,

Signed — Mutsuhito (Emperor Meiji)
Countersigned — Sanjō Sanetomi, Prime Minister



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# The Need for News of the West

*Note: Kido Takayoshi, a Meiji statesman, believed that the Japanese must be better informed of conditions and developments in the West if they were to raise the cultural level of the nation. In December of 1871, Kido wrote to Shinagawa Yajirō, who had been sent by the government to observe the Franco-Prussian War, asking his cooperation in a project for the dissemination of news about the West in Japan. This reading includes excerpts from Kido's letter, as well as Shinagawa's reply.*

* * * * *

**Excerpts from Kido to Shinagawa:**

It is my plan to open a news office which will publish all the news—both domestic and foreign—for the edification of our people in every province and fief. I feel that it will contribute to their enlightenment. I therefore request you to write me at every opportunity on anything that will help educate our people, starting with accounts of the great war between the countries. As our country's cultural standard is considerably lower than that of the countries of Europe, I hope that you will make the articles as easy as possible for our people to read. As you know, our people—eight- or nine-tenths of them—are obdurate and stubborn. Thus, if this newspaper office is opened by the government, they will suspect that it is at the government's disposal, and they will pay little attention to it. Therefore, I should like to have it opened as if the government had nothing to do with it. I feel that it should be permitted to discuss the government's affairs to a certain degree—and even critically, if there is anything unreasonable about them. I mention this, of course, in the event of such an exigency.

The other day one of your letters from New York reached me. Some of the information in it has already appeared in foreign language newspapers, but as it also contained news yet unknown to us, I submitted it to His Majesty's attention. That letter contained much that was highly instructive; and therefore I wish you to bear in mind my plans for a news office and to discuss it with Samejima. If it is feasible I should like to have Samejima write me steadily on the affairs of European countries which would be of interest to our people. I shall forthwith forward them to the news office to be published. Kindly inform Mori Kinnojō, who has been dispatched to America, and Nawa Kan, who has

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Source: Ryusaku Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume II,* pp. 145-147.
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accompanied him, about our plans for this newspaper office. If they will write about America and on other matters of interest to our people, and send them to my address I shall forward them for publication in the same newspaper. I shall be especially obliged if you will be good enough to make the arrangements with Nawa.

**Excerpts from Shinagawa's reply to Kido:**

Because of Your Excellency's advice on the occasion of my appointment to go abroad, I did not entertain the thought of going home after a mere glance at Europe. I was anxious to do something for my country, when the thought occurred to me to start a newspaper. Immediately upon my arrival in America, Yamamoto Jinsuke and I went directly to a newspaper office to pay a visit. We were shown the printing presses and were told of the importance of the newspaper in the daily life of the people. A subsequent visit I made to England, Germany, and France increased my convictions about the indispensability of the newspaper to contemporary life. Such was my enthusiasm in this regard that Ōyama and others have been calling me "Newspaper." As I have been looking forward to the day when I could return to my country and start a newspaper of my own, the coincidence in our plans of which I learned from Your Excellency's letter made me jump with joy. I shall be praying from this side of the world for the success of Your Excellency's publication venture. When European newspapers are translated for publication under Your Excellency's personal direction, the benefits to the country, if I may be permitted to say, would far exceed any that might come from the addition of two or three Ministers of the State Council.



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# Opinion on Military Affairs and Conscription, 1872

A military force is required to defend the country and protect its people. Previous laws of this country inculcated in the minds of the samurai these basic functions, and there was no separation between the civilian and military affairs. Nowadays civilian officials and military officials have separate functions, and the practice of having the samurai serve both functions has been abandoned. It is now necessary to select and train those who can serve the military functions, and herein lies the change in our military system. . . .

As your subjects carefully consider this matter, we discover that we are now maintaining the Ministry of Military Affairs to serve domestic purposes, but in the future it will be required to serve foreign policy purposes. When we probe the matter further, we find that foreign and domestic considerations are essentially one and cannot be separated. This is so because, if our defense establishment is organized sufficiently to defend ourselves against threat from foreign countries, we shall have no fear of our inability to cope with domestic situations.

The status of our armed forces today is as follows: We have the so-called Imperial Guards whose functions are nothing more than to protect the sacred person of His Majesty and to guard the Imperial Palace. We have altogether more than twenty battalions manning the four military garrisons who are deployed to maintain domestic tranquility, and are not equipped to fight against any foreign threat. As to our navy, we have a few battleships yet to be completed. How can they be sufficient to counteract foreign threats?

. . . . The first concern of the Ministry of Military Affairs is to set up a system to defend our homeland. For this purpose two categories of soldiers are required: a standing army and those on the reserve list. The number of troops differs from country to country. Of the major countries, Russia maintains the largest number of troops and the United States the smallest. The reason for this discrepancy comes from the fact that the governmental system differs from one country to another. Consequently the regulations governing each of the countries also differ. The Netherlands and Belgium are among the smallest countries, but they are located between large countries, and in order to avoid contempt and scorn from their neighbors, they diligently go about the business of defending their countries. Even though one of these countries has a total area not exceeding one-third of the area of our country, it maintains a standing army numbering not less than forty to fifty thousand. If we apply the existing standards prevailing in our country to judge these two countries, they may appear to

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Source: David John Lu, *Sources of Japanese History, Volume 2*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974, pp. 42-46. Reprinted with permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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be concerned only with military affairs to the neglect of other matters. However, they do attend to hundreds of other affairs of state and do not abandon them. This is possible because their national goals are already set, and they can act accordingly to implement them.

Therefore the creation of a standing army for our country is a task which cannot be delayed. It is recommended that a certain number of strong and courageous young men be selected from each of the prefectures in accordance with the size of the prefectures, and that such young men be trained in the Western-type military science and placed under rigorous drills, so that they may be deployed as occasion demands.

The so-called reservists do not normally remain within the military barracks. During peacetime they remain in their homes, and in an emergency they are called to service. All of the countries in Europe have reservists, and amongst them Prussia has most of them. There is not a single able-bodied man in Prussia who is not trained in military affairs. Recently Prussia and France fought each other and the former won handily. This is due in large measure to the strength of its reservists.

It is recommended that our country adopt a system under which any able-bodied man twenty years of age be drafted into military service, unless his absence from home will create undue hardship for his family. There shall be no distinction made between the common man and those who are of the samurai class. They shall all be formed into ranks, and after completion of a period of service, they shall be returned to their homes [to become reservists]. In this way every man will become a soldier, and not a single region in the country will be without defense. Thus our defense will become complete.

The second concern of the Ministry is coastal defense. This includes building of warships and constructing coastal batteries. Actually, battleships are movable batteries. Our country has thousands of miles of coastline, and any mobile corner of our country can become the advance post of our enemy. However, since it is not possible to construct batteries along the coastline everywhere, it is imperative to expand our navy and construct the largest warships. The latter can cover the areas that cannot be reached by the batteries and protect our homeland. The topography which is formed by nature cannot be changed by man. Every time there is war, the important strategic points will suffer the consequences of warfare. Therefore, a defense line must be predetermined during peacetime, and a line must be drawn clearly which must be strictly guarded, and people must be told to evacuate.

The third concern of the Military is to create resources for the navy and the army. There are three items under consideration, namely military academies, a bureau of military supplies, and a bureau of munitions depots. It is not difficult to have one million soldiers in a short time, but it is difficult to gain one good officer during the same span of time. Military academies are intended to train officers for these two services. If we pay little



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attention to this need today, we shall not be able to have the services of capable officers for another day. Therefore, without delay military academies must be created and be allowed to prosper. Students shall be adequately trained by the faculty consisting of experts from several countries. There shall be established a set of regulations in the teaching of military drills and other subjects. The goal is to gain a supply of capable officers in a number larger than needed. The bureau of military supplies shall be in charge of procuring military provisions and manufacturing weapons of war for the two services. The bureau of munitions depots shall store such provisions and munitions. If we lack military provisions and weapons and our munitions depots are empty, what good will the million soldiers in the army or thousands of warships do? Therefore, well-qualified craftsmen from various countries must be hired to make necessary machines and build strong storage houses. We must make our own weapons and store them, and must become self-sufficient without relying on foreign countries. The goal is to create a sufficient amount and if there is any surplus it may be sold to other [countries].

Those of us who govern must first of all discern the conditions prevailing in the world, set up priorities and take appropriate measures. In our opinion Russia has been acting very arrogantly. Previously, contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Sevastopol [*sic*], she placed her warships in the Black Sea. Southward, she has shown her aggressive intent toward Moslem countries and toward India. Westward, she has crossed the borders of Manchuria and has been navigating the Amur River. Her intents being thus, it is inevitable that she will move eastward sooner or later by sending troops to Hokkaido, and then taking advantage of the seasonal wind move to the warmer areas.

At a time like this it is very clear where the priority of this country must lie. We must now have a well-trained standing army supplemented by a large number of reservists. We must build warships and construct batteries. We must train officers and soldiers. We must manufacture and store weapons and ammunitions. The nation may consider that it cannot bear the expenses. However, even if we wish to ignore it, this important matter cannot disappear from us. Even if we prefer to enter into this type of defense undertaking, we cannot do without our defense for a single day. This situation is repeated everywhere in the country. At a time when a strong enemy from the north threatens us, can we afford not to make grand preparations? As to the actual system of installations, feeding of soldiers, building of ships, and all other matters and the expenses connected with them, we shall make a detailed report at a later date. Meanwhile, the above recommendations from the Ministry of Military Affairs represent its considered judgment and show the goals it wishes to attain. We respectfully submit these for your consideration.

(Signed) Vice Minister of Military Affairs Yamagata Aritomo
Deputy Vice Minister Kawamura Sumiyoshi
Deputy Vice Minister Saigō Tsugumichi.

# Document Analysis

1. a. Who were the authors of the document?

   b. Who was the intended audience (e.g., Western nations, Japanese people, industrial leaders, etc.)?

2. What goals did the document set for Japan? Did the document establish a policy—or method—for achieving these goals? If so, describe.

3. Why was this goal seen as important?

4. What specific changes did the document call for in Japanese society or government?

5. To which of the three national slogans, listed below, was the document targeted? How?

   - *Bunmei Kaika*—Civilization and Enlightenment
   - *Fukoku Kyōhei*—Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army
   - *Shokusan Kōgyō*—Encourage Industry

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# 3 *Bunmei Kaika*: The Role of Art in Promoting Government Policy

**Introduction:** At the close of the Tokugawa period, Japan was forced to accept unequal treaties with the Western nations. The new Meiji government set as one of its primary goals the reversal of these treaties and the international recognition of Japan as an "equal among civilized nations."

Among the Meiji government's formidable challenges in meeting this goal were the modernization of government, industry, and transportation and the study and application of science and technology. An integral piece of the formula was the creation of a national identity and the mobilization of the Japanese people behind this identity. Throughout the early Meiji period (1868 through the mid-1880s), the government employed a variety of slogans as emblems and instruments of national policy.

The Japanese government's policy of aggressive modernization between 1868 and the late 1880s was reflected in the slogans of Bunmei Kaika, Fukoku Kyōhei, and Shokusan Kōgyō. These slogans translated as "Civilization and Enlightenment," "Enrich the Nation; Strengthen the Army," and "Encourage Industry." (See Lesson 2 in this unit.) During this period, the path to civilization, enlightenment, enrichment, and industry was through large-scale borrowing and adaptation of Western philosophy and technology. As the Meiji leaders sought appropriate Western models for government, education, industry, transportation, and commerce, urban Japanese became caught up in a craze for Western culture in the form of clothing, architecture, food, and manners.

In this lesson, students will examine a series of woodblock prints from the early Meiji period. In so doing, students will identify aspects of Japan's modernization. In addition, they will consider the role Japanese artists played in promoting the government policy of modernization and encouraging popular identification with the new national identity that the Meiji government sought to achieve. This lesson lends itself to interdisciplinary art-history projects which may be conducted in cooperation with the school's art department. One such project is offered at the conclusion of this lesson.

**Objectives:** Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Define and identify several dimensions of Bunmei Kaika, Fukoku Kyōhei, and Shokusan Kōgyō as government-directed national efforts to modernize Japan.

2. Explore the role of artists and art media in promoting government programs and molding popular attitudes.

3. Analyze Japanese views regarding modernization and Westernization, as depicted in primary source materials and art.

**Materials:** Handout 3A for all students; Handouts 3B and 3C (optional); Slides 3A through 3L; slide projector and screen

**Time required:** 2 class periods, with optional homework/independent project

**Procedure:**

1. Review with students what they learned in Lesson 2 about the motivation for the Meiji Restoration and the new Meiji government's goals and strategies for modernizing Japan in the late 1800s. *Students should be able to cite the threat and challenge that highly industrialized Western nations posed to the agricultural, traditional nation of Japan at the end of the Tokugawa period in the 1850s; the frustration of the unequal treaties imposed by the United States and European nations; and the commitment of the new Meiji government to reform and modernize government, education, the economy, and society so that Japan would be recognized among the civilized nations of the world.*

2. Through a brief introductory lecture or reading assignment, present background on Japanese woodblock prints as both an art form and social record. This information is provided in the Background Notes to this lesson (see page 67), which may be duplicated for student reading.

3. Following the lecture or reading, ask students to react to the notion that art can promote government policies. Can they think of American examples of art promoting patriotism or other national ideals? Have students consider art such as Norman Rockwell's "The Four Freedoms," WPA murals of the 1930s, or armed forces enlistment posters. How does this art help to promote national ideals? *Students might note that these images depict determination and courage in the face of threat or danger; they show heroism, and so on.*

4. Tell students that, as a class, they will be viewing a selection of Japanese woodblock prints and other artwork from the early Meiji period. Distribute Handout 3A and review the categories with students. Emphasize that this retrieval chart asks students to analyze the slides on **two levels**: columns 1 and 2 ask students to look at the artwork as a historical recording of events, while columns 3 and 4 require students to consider the pictures for their artistic style and technique. Depending on time, class size and ability, and other factors, you may choose to divide the class into two groups, assigning one group to focus on analyzing the art as historical record and the other to analyze the artistry itself.

5. Show the slides as you read from the slide script provided at the end of the procedure section, page 69. As students view the slides, ask them to make notes on their retrieval charts.

6. Show the slides a second time. As each slide is projected on the screen, have

students share their observations from the first viewing. As a class, spend time discussing each print on the two levels mentioned in procedure 4. The following questions may guide discussion.

- How has the print created a social and historical record—that is, what does the print show about changes taking place in early Meiji Japan, the degree of Westernization, and specific achievements in modernizing Japan? *Students should be able to cite Western dress on men, women, and children; Western hairstyles and clothing; Western transportation and technology including trains, carriages, steamships, air balloons, power lines, silk reeling or sewing machines; Western-style architecture; Western-style department stores.*

- What have students noticed about the way subjects, activities, and events have been portrayed? About the style, mood, and color used in these portrayals? *Students should be able to cite the use of vibrant colors, movement, crowds, activity, celebrations, leisure time, and so on.*

- Think about style, mood, color. What impression or feeling do such things as the multi- and vibrant-colored compositions, the movement and activity, and so on inspire in the viewer of these prints? Do students think these pieces would be effective in creating enthusiasm and support for modernization and Westernization? Why?

7. Review the final slide of the launching of a hot air balloon. How does this print reflect a triumphant and patriotic view of the Japanese push to modernize? *Students should note that there is a huge crowd at the balloon sendoff, Japanese flags are waving, and Mt. Fuji, a national symbol, is in the background.*

8. To evaluate learning from this lesson, you may ask students to select one of the following application activities. Option C outlines a several-day art project to be conducted in collaboration with your school's art department.

A. Ask students to imagine that they are Japanese people living in one of the bigger cities such as Tokyo or Yokohama in the 1880s, the middle of the Meiji period. Students should synthesize what they have seen and learned about changes in Japanese society and economy to write a letter to a friend or relative living in rural Japan. In the letter, they should describe changes taking place in the cities and express their views of the positive and negative aspects of these changes.

B. Some students may prefer an art activity. If so, distribute the optional Handout 3B. This brief essay is an excerpt from Fukuzawa Yukichi's books on Western life, which were introduced to students in Slides 3F-3H. In this excerpt, Fukuzawa provides details on Western eating utensils, food preference, and manners. Ask students to use the reading, as well as their understanding of how art was used to promote change and acceptance of change during this period, to create a picture which would portray and promote the use of Western

eating utensils and customs as one aspect of Bunmei Kaika, "Civilization and Enlightenment." Students choosing this project should try to create a picture in "woodblock print" style—that is applying what they have learned about color, mood, composition, and detail.

C. To apply their understanding of artistic principles, styles, and technique, as well as the social messages of Meiji woodblock prints, students may create their own three-color block prints. For this project, arrange for 1-3 class periods with a cooperating art teacher and follow the directions on Handout 3C.

# The Art of the Woodblock Print in Japan

The Japanese woodblock print is a traditional art form dating back to the mid-1600s, early in Japan's Tokugawa period. Woodblock printing became popular as a way to inexpensively meet the growing demand for artwork by increasingly prosperous merchants and artisans, as well as other urban dwellers. Because printmaking replicates an image many times, it is an effective method for creating visual images at a cost far below that of paintings.

## The Printmaking Process

In Japan, woodblock printing has traditionally been a collaborative project requiring the expert contributions of several different artists and master artisans. The print begins as a drawing designed by the artist. The artist also selects the colors and the paper to be used for the print. In Japan, woodblocks are printed on *washi*, a strong but supple paper made from any one of several plant fibers. The process is then turned over to a master woodcarver.

The woodcarving process is divided among a master carver, who carves the most difficult lines, and assistants, who carve remaining lines. The woodcarvers create a separate carved block for each color of the woodblock print. After colors are applied, the paper is placed on one block at a time and rubbed with a brush or pad made of bamboo sheath until all the colors are printed. The beauty of each print depends on the skill of the person who does the rubbing as much as it depends on the artist and the carvers. Shade and depth of color and detail depend on the pressure of the rubbing.

## Tokugawa Woodblock Prints

In Japan, woodblock prints were an early popular art form, both in terms of audience and subject matter. At least one art historian has likened this art form to our contemporary poster and calendar art. During the Tokugawa period, woodblock print artists often took as their subject matter the everyday lives and pastimes of urban dwellers, particularly the lives of *geisha*, *kabuki* actors, and other entertainers. Prints with this focus were given the name *ukiyo-e*, or "pictures of the floating world." In the late Tokugawa period—the 1800s—woodblock print subjects expanded to include landscapes and scenic spots frequented by travelers.

## Meiji Woodblock Prints

In the early Meiji period, woodblock prints evolved into an inexpensive way to inform the public. They were often used as illustrations in public information circulars and sold by itinerant vendors and wholesalers to Japanese of every age and walk of life.

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Woodblock prints during the Meiji period focused on current events, urban life, and social change. Woodblock print artists often made prints of events they had not witnessed, such as the arrival of Commodore Perry and his "black ships," or of events for which they had only seen pictures themselves, such as the Japanese mission to the United States or the issuance of the constitution of 1889. However, by mass producing and distributing these images, the artists helped to create a common core of information (or misinformation) about current events in Japan.

It is important to note that all art, whether it intends to portray reality or not, depicts a point of view. The woodblock prints of current events and social change in Meiji Japan were no different. Through the prints, artists helped popularize and win support for Westernization among the Japanese public. Artists and woodblock print publishers agreed with the government's promotion of modernization and served as unofficial agents of Meiji government policy. Woodblock prints announcing the latest in Western imports and new technology engaged the emotions of the Japanese public, prompting the social consensus needed to build a strong nation.

Throughout the Meiji period, woodblock prints remained an extremely popular form of informative art. Much of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Japan's first major international conflict as a modern military power, was recorded through woodblock prints. However, by the end of the war, photography and lithography became popular as more technologically advanced techniques for documenting events.



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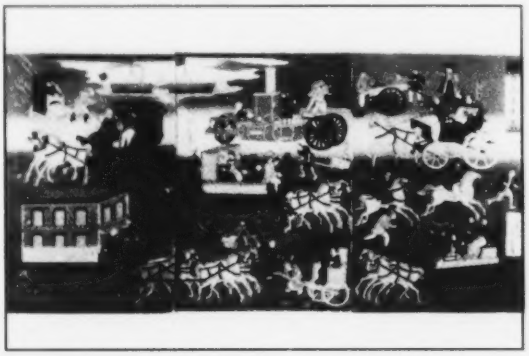
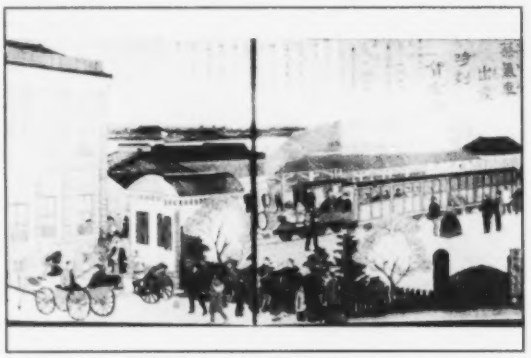
# Slide Script for Lesson 3

**Slide 3A: "Enumeration of Vehicles in Transit in Tokyo," 1870, by Utagawa Yoshitora.** In this 1870 woodblock print, the artist has created a composite image of a variety of conveyances for goods and passengers, both Japanese and foreign. In the distance, in a gap in the clouds, a steamship floats in the bay. In the upper right corner is a Western cannon. Identify as many Western and Japanese vehicles as you can. What adjectives come to mind to describe this print? What spirit or feeling does the picture evoke? How does the artist seem to feel about modern inventions? What might be the "message" of so much motion and activity?



*The Yokohama Exhibit, Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Daval Foundation: From the Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. William Leonhart, Washington, D.C.*

**Slide 3B: View of railroad station with train schedule, 1872, by Hiroshige II or III.**



*Woodblock print, triptych; Japan's first railroad between Tokyo and Yokohama. Hiroshige Ando II or III. Used by permission of Carousel Research, Inc.*

**Slide 3C: "Famous Views of Tokyo": Picture of brick and stone shops on Ginza Avenue, 1876, by Hiroshige III.** The Ginza commercial district suffered extensive destruction by fire in 1872. Thomas Waters, an English architect, was officially commissioned to rebuild the area in brick, with the hope that it would then be fireproof. Although the effort to reconstruct in a completely Western style was not readily accepted by many Japanese, visits to the Ginza became quite popular, as this image suggests.

*The Yokohama Exhibit, Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Daval Foundation: From the Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. William Leonhart, Washington, D.C.*

Passing along the street are a passenger bus drawn by a team of horses and two *jinrikisha*, traditional Japanese human-powered carriages. The shops are hung with the traditional Japanese curtains bearing shop trademarks. Look for the image of a kimono-clad Japanese woman holding a Western-style umbrella. Find other examples of passers-by in Western or Japanese dress, or combinations. What does this say about the times?

**Slide 3D: "Prosperity of an English Trading Firm in Yokohama" (detail), by Yoshiiku.** Notice Western architecture, people in Western and Japanese dress. What is going on in the scene? Does the print convey a positive or negative sense of trade with the West? How?

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.*

**Slide 3E: Picture of an imported silk factory at Tsukiji, in Tokyo, 1872, by Utagawa Yoshitora.** Silk production became one of Japan's leading industries in the Meiji period. In this print, workers appear busy and happy. What are some of the specific tasks in silk production? What sex are almost all the workers? By the 1880s, silk workers, who were mostly women, worked long hours in extremely hot, cramped factories—not the idyllic scene pictured here.

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.*

The next three slides show illustrations by Fukuzawa Yukichi from his essays and books on Western life. The drawings were designed to familiarize Japanese people with typical Western clothing, furniture, houses, and customs. In 1867, Fukuzawa published three volumes on Western clothing, food, and homes. The books made him an authority on Western matters. The books provided basic information on how to eat, dress, and so on.

**Slide 3F: Western clothing, food, and homes, 1867.** The top pages show a long undershirt and drawers, a flannel shirt, and an outer shirt; lower pages depict trousers, suspenders, stockings, collars, and a waistcoat.

**Slide 3G: Western clothing, food, and homes, 1867.**
Raised beds were entirely new to the Japanese. In his volumes on Western customs, Fukuzawa wrote:

"A bed is about three feet wide and six feet long. There are three layers of bedding; a straw mattress on the bottom, then a cotton one, and a wool one on the top. Finally a white cloth is placed over them. The thickness of all layers should be almost one-and-a-half feet. However, the covers that are used are extremely thin. They use only two top sheets and one or two blankets. Although the top covers are thin, you can stay warm all night with your body sinking into the soft mattress. The bed linens are extremely clean. The sheets are white as snow, and you never find any fleas or lice.

The container that you see under the bed in the illustration is a chamber pot. You always find this thing underneath the bed when you stay in a Westerner's house. You should be careful not to mistake this container for something else when you visit a Western country as some Japanese actually did.

A watch is a somewhat irrelevant subject as regards Western living, but the author believes it is quite necessary to familiarize oneself with reading the time; all people carry a watch in the West to know the time without relying on temple bells as in our country."

**Slide 3H: Western clothing, food, and homes, 1867.**
Sketches of tables and tableware, as well as bathroom utensils, were new to the Japanese. Look closely and try to identify the objects depicted in these drawings.

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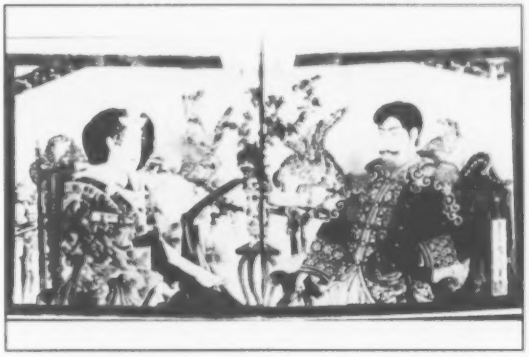
**Slide 3I: "Comparisons of Beautiful Women in Western Coiffures," 1887, by Chikanobu.** The three-paneled woodblock print is called a triptych. Woodblock prints such as these provided Japanese with a standard in Western fashion while providing valuable "how-tos" on such things as hairstyles.

*The Yokohama Exhibit, Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Daval Foundation; From the Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. William Leonhart, Washington, D.C.*

**Slide 3J: "Portrait of Nobility," 1885, by Toyohara Kunichika.** Look carefully at this slide and the next one, depicting the emperor and his wife. How would photos and prints of the emperor and empress dressed in Western clothing and involved in Western pastimes encourage the Japanese people of the early Meiji period to embrace Westernization?



*Kanagawa Prefectural Museum, Yokohama, Japan.*

**Slide 3K: "Children's song composed by the empress," 1887, by Toyohara Kunichika.**

*Kanagawa Prefectural Museum, Yokohama, Japan.*

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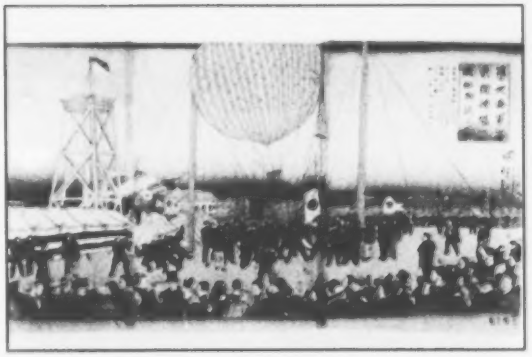
**Slide 3L: "Trial Balloon Launch at the Naval Academy Training Ground at Tsukiji," by Hiroshige III.** In the midst of a vast crowd of onlookers, a manned balloon flying the Japanese flag pulls upward as men struggle with the anchoring ropes. The crowd encompasses a variety of Japanese spectators, some dressed in fashionable Western suits and hats and others wearing kimono and traditional hairstyles. Mount Fuji, a familiar image in many Japanese prints, is just visible on the horizon, framed not by nature but by an example of modern technology.



*Yokohama Exhibit, Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Davat Foundation: From the Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. William Leonhart, Washington, D.C.*



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# Art and Government Policy

In Meiji Japan, woodblock prints functioned very much like photographs do today. Artists recorded everyday life and special events with great detail. As a result, these prints may be viewed as records of social change, everyday life, industry, manners, and so on. At the same time, the woodblock prints are, of course, artistic works, reflecting particular uses of color, mood, composition, and point of view. As you view each slide, record notes about the images, both as historical records and as works of art.

| Slide | Evidence of government policies: Civilization and Enlightenment; Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army; Encourage Industry | Specific examples of Westernization and modernization | Artist's use of color, movement, mood, composition | Artist's view of changes taking place in Japan |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3A: Vehicles in transit in Tokyo | | | | |
| 3B: View of railroad station with train schedule | | | | |
| 3C: Views of Tokyo: shops on Ginza Avenue | | | | |

| Slide | Evidence of government policies: Civilization and Enlightenment; Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army; Encourage Industry | Specific examples of Westernization and modernization | Artist's use of color, movement, mood, composition | Artist's view of changes taking place in Japan |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3D: English trading firm | | | | |
| 3E: Silk Factory | | | | |
| 3F, G, H: Western clothing, food, and homes | | | | |
| 3I: Women in Western coiffures | | | | |

| Slide | Evidence of Government Policies: Civilization and Enlightenment; Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army; Encourage Industry | Specific examples of Westernization and modernization | Artist's use of color, movement, mood, composition | Artist's view of changes taking place in Japan |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3J: Portrait of nobility | | | | |
| 3K: Children's song composed by the empress | | | | |
| 3L: Trial balloon launch | | | | |

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# Western Food and Manners

Fukuzawa Yukichi was a Meiji scholar who studied and wrote about Western manners and ways of life. Through his popular essays and books, he tried to make Western customs more understandable to the people of Meiji Japan. Below is Fukuzawa's brief description of Western eating utensils, food, and manners.

Based on this description and what you know about the role of art in promoting change in Meiji Japan, create a picture which would a) clarify to a Japanese viewer how to eat Western-style, and b) encourage the viewer to try this new eating method. Try to create your picture in "woodblock print" style—that is, try to demonstrate some of the uses of color, composition, and detail that you have seen in woodblock prints of this period.

> Westerners do not use chopsticks for eating. Meat is cut very carefully and then transferred to each individual's plate. Set in front of each person are a knife which is held in the right hand in order to cut a small piece of the meat, and a fork which is held in the left hand in order to stick the piece of meat and bring it to the mouth. It is awfully bad manners to use a knife to carry food to your mouth.
>
> Soup is also served in a plate, and is eaten with a spoon. It has to be remembered that slurping is bad manners, even when you drink tea. . . . At a banquet, twenty or even thirty guests sit at one big table.
>
> For regular meals, red wine, sherry, or port wine are served. On special occasions champagne and various other kinds of liquor are served. One drinks brandy in a small cup after meals. The liquor made of barley called "beer" has a peculiar, bitter taste. Some people like beer because of that bitterness. Whiskey and brandy are too strong to drink during meals. They are unsophisticated drinks, preferred mainly by lower class men.
>
> —Fukuzawa Yukichi

---

Source: Julia Meech-Pekarik, *The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization*. New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1986, p. 68.

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# Multi-color Printmaking Project

**Materials needed:**

- styrofoam trays with flat, untextured spaces (commonly used by grocery stores in meat packaging or for carry-out food)
- scissors
- three colors of water-based printing ink
- flat surface (glass or metal) to roll out ink with brayer
- brayers (ink rollers)
- white construction paper
- spoons
- newspaper to cover printing area
- paper towels

**Procedure:**

1. Form working groups of three to four students. Each group should select or create an image for its print design. Groups may use their poster design from Lesson 2, their woodblock-style drawing from procedure 8B in this lesson, or a new image. The design should be simple and require only three colors to print.

2. Use scissors to cut the largest possible smooth and flat area from the styrofoam trays. Each student group needs three equal-sized pieces of styrofoam.

3. Draw print design on paper to equal the size of the styrofoam, making sure that the design is uncomplicated and requires only three colors of ink.

4. Separate the design into three color areas as show in Figures A-C. Choose an ink color for each area.

5. Lay the drawing on one piece of styrofoam and lightly trace the outlines for the first color with a pencil. Use a pencil to press down the remaining areas on the styrofoam tray that should not print in that color.

6. Repeat the process for each of the other two colors on the remaining styrofoam pieces.

7. Lightly draw a pencil line around the edges of one styrofoam tray onto the printing paper. Use the outline to align each styrofoam tray for printing the separate colors.

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8. For each color, roll a small amount of ink over a smooth flat surface to evenly coat the brayer. Roll the brayer on the styrofoam until it is evenly coated with ink. If any undesired areas are colored, clean the styrofoam area and press with a pencil, then re-ink.

9. Lay the styrofoam tray face down onto the paper, lining it up with the pencil outline. Carefully flip the paper and tray over without moving the tray. Rub evenly over the raised areas with a spoon. Lift the paper from the tray and let dry.

10. Clean the brayer and inking surface with water; dry with paper towels. Repeat the printing process for each of the other two colors.



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**Figure A** shows all the areas to be printed in black ink, including the outlines for facial features, clothing, and hair ribbons. All other areas on this styrofoam tray should be pressed down so that they will not be inked.

*Figure A*

**Figure B** shows all the areas to be printed in blue ink. All other areas on this styrofoam tray should be pressed down.

*Figure B*

**Figure C** shows all the areas to be printed in red ink. All other areas on this styrofoam tray should be pressed down.

*Figure C*

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# 4 The Meiji Constitution of 1889

**Introduction:** In the Meiji government's quest for a modern national identity and international recognition, the Constitution of 1889 was a landmark document. As Japan's first formal, written constitution, it was offered by the Japanese government as a symbol of that nation's "coming of age" in the world of "modern" nations. It is also a unique and fascinating document because, while it took its form from European models of constitutional government, its substance reflects an adherence to traditional, conservative Japanese social and political values. In this document of the late Meiji period, students can find evidence of the Meiji leaders stepping back from wholesale Westernization, and fine-tuning a national identity which would embrace the best of their own traditions while adopting and adapting useful aspects of Western-style constitutional political systems.

In this two-part activity, students are introduced to the historical factors precipitating the writing of the Meiji Constitution through a brief lecture or reading. They then analyze the goals of the constitution's framers as well as specific segments of the constitution. In so doing, they consider the symbolic importance of this document in presenting an image of Japan as a modern nation, capable of dealing on equal terms with Western nations. Finally, they recognize how the Meiji Constitution defined and formalized a national identity which drew upon traditional, conservative Japanese values at the same time that it presented to the world a modernized government based on written law.

This activity is most appropriate for courses which include a focus on law or government.

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Describe factors leading to the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

2. Analyze the Meiji Constitution from the perspectives of Western influences on Japan and Japanese national goals during this period.

3. Discuss the symbolic and practical role the Meiji Constitution served in helping the Meiji government define and showcase Japan as a modern nation with a unique cultural identity.

**Time required:** 2 class periods plus homework

**Materials:** Handouts 4A, 4B, 4C; Slides 4A and 4B

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**Procedure:**

**Part I**

1. To establish a context for this lesson, ask students to briefly review the challenges Japan faced during the Meiji period and the goals the Meiji government set to meet these challenges. *From prior lessons in this unit, students should be able to discuss:*

- *the military and economic challenges to Japan posed by industrialized Western nations;*
- *Japan's inability to withstand Western demands for trading privileges, as reflected in the unequal treaties; and*
- *the Meiji leaders' commitment to rapidly industrialize and modernize all aspects of Japanese government and economy in order to win respect from and parity with the West.*

2. Through the following questions and class discussion, clarify with students the purpose of a written constitution for national government.

- What is a constitution? *A set of rules for the operation of government.*
- What does a constitution define? *The nature and processes of government.*
- Why do nations have constitutions? Do all constitutions work in the same way? *Note different forms of government defined by constitutions such as constitutional monarchy, republican government, parliamentary government, representative government.*

3. Ask students to hypothesize how Japan's lack of a written constitution might have put that nation at additional political disadvantage in its dealings with Western nations in the late 1800s. How might a Western-style, written constitution have benefited Japan in dealing with Western nations? *The adoption of a Western-style written constitution may have helped Japan win the respect of Western nations and helped Japan present itself as an equal with Western nations. A set of written laws would also have strengthened Japan's case for an end to extraterritoriality, whereby foreigners claimed immunity from Japanese laws.*

4. Provide students with the details of the Meiji Restoration and Constitution of 1889, as outlined in the Background Notes on page 89. This information may be presented through a brief lecture or may be reproduced and distributed as a homework reading.

If students conduct the reading as a homework assignment, review the main points in class. Issues to discuss and emphasize include:



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- psychological and diplomatic motivations for writing a constitution: *Students should note that such a document could assist Japan in gaining equal footing with Western nations.*

- Japan's rejection of a constitution modeled after that of the United States. *Students should recognize that U.S. models of popular sovereignty and democracy contradicted a heredity ruler such as Japan's emperor, and so could not be tolerated.*

- Japan's selection of a politically conservative constitutional model—that of limited representative government—which would still allow for imperial authority.

Be sure to point out to students that the Meiji Constitution of 1889 is no longer in operation; it was replaced after World War II by a new constitution.

5. Project Slide 4A, a woodblock print depicting the issuance of the Meiji Constitution. Remind students that for most Japanese, as well as Westerners, information about the new constitution came from woodblock prints. This woodblock print depicts the presentation and announcement of the constitution and the huge ceremony surrounding that event. You may also project Slide 4B, a Western-style oil painting of the same event. Use one or both slides to explore the following questions:

- What do you see happening in this scene? Describe the event, the people attending, the room, and so on.

- What evidence do you see that the issuance of the constitution was a Western-style ceremony? *European-style military uniforms, European dress on women, European clock with Roman numerals; European-style throne and red carpet; chandeliers, etc.*

- Describe the pomp and ceremony surrounding the event. How would the ceremony have impressed the Western observers—the foreign ambassadors pictured on the right side in various uniforms? *The ceremony was very formal—carpet, throne, uniforms, etc.—and may have impressed foreign observers with Japan's seriousness of purpose.*

6. For homework, have students take the role of foreign observers at the constitutional ceremony, writing an editorial or letter back to the United States describing the event and its significance in terms of Japan's efforts to become a modern nation.

**Part II**

In this component of the lesson, students read and analyze significant portions of the Meiji Constitution to identify and assess the blending of Japanese and Western elements in the document.

1. Open the class by asking students the following questions: Given all the Western-style ceremony surrounding the issuance of the Meiji Constitution, would you expect that document to be similar to a European or American constitution in content? Why?

2. Share with the class the quotes from Handout 4A. This handout may be most useful if made into an overhead transparency. Ask students to read and comment on the statements by Itō Hirobumi, a framer of the Meiji Constitution, and by Richard Halloran, a contemporary American political scientist. Both these commentators emphasize that the Meiji Constitution appeared Western in style but was uniquely Japanese in content, defining important traditional values.

How do these statements compare to the messages conveyed by the artistic representations of the issuance of the Meiji Constitution that the class studied in Part I of this lesson? What kinds of provisions do students think might be in the constitution?

3. Turn students' attention to the actual constitution. Explain that they will work in small groups, studying selected sections of the constitution to identify ways in which the document sought to define a unique national character and set of values for Japan.

Distribute Handout 4B, Excerpts from the Meiji Constitution, and 4C, The Meiji Constitution Analysis Sheet. Ask each of the work groups to analyze one of the following sections: The Preamble, The Emperor, or The Rights and Duties of Subjects.

4. Discuss student findings in class, using the Handout 4C Answer Key on page 93 as a guide. Possible focus questions might include:

- As expressed in the constitution, how was Japan beginning to define itself as a nation?
- What did the Japanese see as unique about their country and government?
- What was the role and significance of the emperor? What function did the emperor serve in defining Japan's national identity and uniqueness?

5. To extend the activity, the class might refer to comparable sections of the U.S. Constitution—particularly the preamble, the sections on the executive branch, and the Bill of Rights—to make comparisons between the ideas and practices of government in Japan and those of the United States in the late 1800s. Specifically, ask students to look for ways in which each of these constitutions reflects its own country's history, traditions, and values.


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# The Meiji Constitution of 1889

Early during the Meiji reign, government leaders established for Japan the goals of industrialization, modernization, and parity with Western nations. These Meiji leaders were well aware that a Western-style, formal, written constitution would be a significant demonstration to the world that Japan had taken steps to become a modern nation. The Meiji leaders saw the adoption of a written constitution as one important way of working toward international acceptance and respect for Japan. Such a document would reflect Japan's study and synthesis of Western political philosophy and indicate Japan's commitment to the rule of law, under which many European nations and the United States were governed. The Meiji government sent scholars and politicians to Europe and the United States to study different models of written government.

Itō Hirobumi, a Meiji leader who became the key architect of the constitution, cautioned against wholesale adoption of Western-style government. He warned that if Japan's experiment with a Western-style document such as a constitution were going to work, that document would have to be a product of Japanese experience. According to Itō, "In the framing of our constitution, our aims must be determined by the ideal of government which conforms with our country's geography, customs and sentiments of the people, and spirit of the times." Itō sought a constitutional model that would present Western-style features and procedures to the world, while preserving and clarifying Japan's national character.

Although the Japanese studied the U.S. Constitution, they ultimately rejected the American model. Essential to the U.S. Constitution was the principle that sovereignty—the government's power to rule—derived from the people. This democratic principle of government "of the people and by the people" was fundamentally incompatible with the idea of a hereditary emperor, a cornerstone of Japanese government throughout history.

The Japanese ultimately turned to the German model of constitutional monarchy as the one most adaptable to the traditions and needs of the Japanese state. This model justified a hereditary ruler as the origin of governmental power and limited the rights of subjects, yet it still allowed some representation. The Meiji Constitution was issued in February 1889 as a gift from the Meiji Emperor to his people. This idea of government as a gift from the emperor to his subjects is a significant contrast to the U.S. Constitution, which is a statement by the people describing the government they will establish.

The Meiji Constitution is a valuable document for examining the national values and goals that were being defined and formalized during the Meiji period. Within the constitution, one can see the adaptation of Western forms of government to Japan's national needs and goals. The constitution formalized and institutionalized many conservative, traditional aspects of Japanese society—such as the sacred status and hereditary power of the emperor—in a Western-style wrapper.

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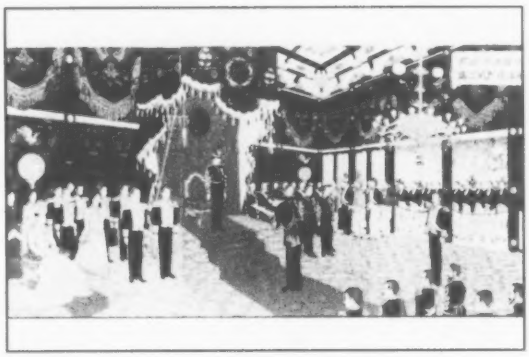
# Slides for Lesson 4

**Slide 4A: Picture of the issuance of the constitution in the state chamber of the New Palace, March 14, 1889, by Adachi Ginkō.**



*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959.*

**Slide 4B: Issuance of the Meiji Constitution, 1889.**

*This photograph by the courtesy of the International Society for Educational Information, Inc., Tokyo*



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# Answer Key for Lesson 4

**Handout 4C:**

**A. The Preamble**

1. According to the Preamble, what is one of the most important historical characteristics of the Japanese? *The unbroken rule of the emperor since the beginning of Japan.*

2. According to the Preamble, who or what is the source of authority in Japan? *The emperor.*

3. What is the importance of ancestors, as stated in the Preamble? *The ways of its ancestors guided Japan; ancestral traditions.*

**B. The Emperor**

1. List five of the emperor's powers. *See articles V-XVII. Some examples are: exercises legislative power, convokes the Diet, can issue ordinances in place of laws made by Diet, supreme commander of army and navy, declares war, concludes treaties.*

2. Which article formalized the Japanese emperor as a godlike figure? How so? *Article III—the Emperor was sacred—a kind of god; the emperor's rule could not be questioned.*

3. In the Meiji Constitution, did the emperor have more or less power than the president of the United States? How do you know? *More: the U.S. president's power derived from the people; the emperor's power was hereditary. The emperor could not be dethroned. The emperor could make laws; the emperor could rule the country totally in an emergency.*

**C. The Rights and Duties of Subjects**

1. Which articles deal with the duties of the people? What are these duties? *Article XX-XXI: service in the armed forces, paying taxes.*

2. List five basic rights that the people of Japan enjoyed under this constitution. *See articles XXII-XXX.*

3. Articles XXII through XXX list the rights of Japanese subjects under the Meiji Constitution. In how many cases in these articles is some limit or condition put on the exercise of these rights by the people? *Eight.*

4. What limit is put on liberty regarding residence? *Limitations imposed by law.*

- On freedom from search and seizure? *Special laws.*
- On private property? *Public welfare.*
- On religion? *Interests of peace and order, duties as subjects.*
- On freedom of petition? *Special rules and observation of proper form of respect.*

5. In general, subjects' freedoms in Meiji Japan were curtailed by what other goals? *The good of government and society as a whole.*

**D. Conclusions**

1. From your analysis of the Meiji Constitution, what characteristics emerge regarding Japan's national government and national identity? That is, what were some of the cornerstones of government and nationhood in Japan at this time? *The unbroken rule of the emperor, Japan's long history, traditions of ancestors, the sacred status of the emperor, respect for authority and tradition, the good of the country as a whole.*

2. As reflected in the constitution, what makes Japan special or unique? *Ancestral traditions, sacred emperor, unbroken imperial line through centuries.*

3. What is "Western" about this document? What seems uniquely Japanese? *Answers will vary. Western—much of the language style, establishment of rule by law, establishment of three branches of government, list of rights and duties of people. Japanese—role and powers of emperor, limitations on individual rights for good of country, references to ancestral traditions.*


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# Perspectives on the Meiji Constitution

"In the framing of our constitution, our aims must be determined by the ideal of government which conforms with our country's geography, customs and sentiments of the people, and the spirit of the times."

—Itō Hirobumi, 1885

"There is no better example of Japanese substance expressed in Western form than this constitution. It crystallized Japanese concepts of national character, sovereignty, social order, and the function of government into a Western-style document not known before in Japan. The constitution embodied Japan's unique national essence, with the emperor at its center; it embraced the sum of Japan's religious, moral, ethical, and social thought."

—Richard Halloran, *Japan: Images and Realities*. New York: Knopf, 1969, p. 24.

# Excerpts from
# The Constitution of the Empire of Japan
# (Meiji Constitution, 1889)

**The Preamble**

Having, by virtue of the glories of Our Ancestors, ascended the throne of a lineal succession unbroken for ages eternal; desiring to promote the welfare of, and to give development to the moral and intellectual faculties of Our beloved subjects, the very same that have been favoured with the benevolent care and affectionate vigilance of Our Ancestors; and hoping to maintain the prosperity of the State, in concert with Our people and with their support, We hereby promulgate, in pursuance of Our Imperial Rescript of the 12th day of the 10th month of the 14th year of Meiji, a fundamental law of State, to exhibit the principles, by which We are to be guided in Our conduct, and to point out to what Our descendants and Our subjects and their descendants are forever to conform.

The rights of sovereignty of the State, We have inherited from Our Ancestors, and We shall bequeath them to Our descendants. Neither We nor they shall in future fail to wield them, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution hereby granted.

We now declare to respect and protect the security of the rights and of the property of Our people, and to secure to them the complete enjoyment of the same, within the extent of the provisions of the present Constitution and of the law.

The Imperial Diet shall first be convoked for the 23rd year of Meiji and the time of its opening shall be the date when the present Constitution comes into force.

When in the future it may become necessary to amend any of the provisions of the present Constitution, We or Our successors shall assume the initiative right, and submit a project for the same to the Imperial Diet. The Imperial Diet shall pass its vote upon it, according to the conditions imposed by the present Constitution, and in no otherwise shall Our descendants or Our subjects be permitted to attempt any alteration thereof.

Our Ministers of State, on Our behalf, shall be held responsible for the carrying out

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Source: Johannes Siemes, *Hermann Roesler and the Meiji State*. Tokyo: Sophia University in cooperation with Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1968, pp. 53-252.

of the present Constitution, and Our present and future subjects shall forever assume the duty of allegiance to the present Constitution.

**The Emperor**

Article I: The Empire of Japan shall be ruled over by Emperors of the dynasty, which has reigned in an unbroken line of descent for ages past.

Article II: The succession to the throne shall devolve upon male descendants of the Imperial House, according to the provisions of the Imperial House Law.

Article III: The person of the Emperor is sacred and inviolable.

Article IV: The Emperor being the Head of the Empire the rights of sovereignty are invested in him, and he exercises them in accordance with the provisions of the present Constitution.

Article V: The Emperor exercises the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet.

Article VI: The Emperor gives sanction to laws, and orders them to be promulgated and put into force.

Article VII: The Emperor convokes the Imperial Diet, opens, closes, and prorogues it, and dissolves the House of Representatives.

Article VIII: In case of urgent necessity, when the Imperial Diet is not sitting, the Emperor, in order to maintain the public safety or to avert a public danger, has the power to issue Imperial Ordinances, which shall take the place of laws. Such Imperial Ordinances shall, however, be laid before the Imperial Diet at its next session, and should the Diet disapprove of the said Ordinances, the Government shall declare them to be henceforth invalid.

Article IX: The Emperor issues, or causes to be issued, the ordinances necessary for the carrying out of the laws, or for the maintenance of public peace and order, and for the promotion of the welfare of his subjects. But no Ordinance shall in any way alter any of the existing laws.

Article X: The Emperor determines the organization of the different branches of the Administration; he fixes the salaries of all civil and military officers, and appoints and dismisses the same. Exceptions specially provided for in the present Constitution or in


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other laws shall be in accordance with the respective provisions bearing thereon.

Article XI: The Emperor has the supreme command of the army and navy.

Article XII: The Emperor determines the organization and peace standing of the army and navy.

Article XIII: The Emperor declares war, makes peace, and concludes treaties.

Article XIV: The Emperor proclaims the law of siege. The conditions and operation of the law of siege shall be determined by law.

Article XV: The Emperor confers titles of nobility, rank, orders, and other marks of honour.

Article XVI: The Emperor orders amnesty, pardon, commutation of punishments, and rehabilitation.

Article XVII: The institution of a Regency shall take place in conformity with provisions of the Imperial House Law.

The Regent shall exercise the supreme powers which belong to the Emperor in his name.

**The Rights and Duties of Subjects**

Article XVIII: The conditions necessary for being a Japanese subject shall be determined by law.

Article XIX: Japanese subjects shall all equally be eligible for civil and military appointments, and any other public offices, subject only to the conditions prescribed by Laws and Ordinances.

Article XX: Japanese subjects are amenable to service in the army or navy, according to the provisions of law.

Article XXI: Japanese subjects are amenable to the duty of paying taxes, according to the provisions of law.

Article XXII: Subject to the limitations imposed by law, Japanese subjects shall enjoy full liberty in regard to residence and change of abode.

Article XXIII: No Japanese subject shall be arrested, detained, tried or punished, except according to law.

Article XXIV: No Japanese subject shall be deprived of his right of being tried by judges determined by law.

Article XXV: Except in the cases provided for in the law, the house of no Japanese subject shall be entered or searched without his permission.

Article XXVI: Except in cases provided for in the law, the secrecy of the letters of Japanese subjects shall not be violated.

Article XXVII: The rights of property of Japanese subjects shall not be violated. Such measures, however, as may be rendered necessary in the interests of the public welfare shall be taken in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Article XXVIII: Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief.

Article XXIX: Japanese subjects shall, within the limits of the law, enjoy liberty in regard to speech, writing, publication, public meetings, and associations.

Article XXX: Japanese subjects may present petitions, provided that they observe the proper form of respect, and comply with the rules specially provided for such matters.

Article XXXI: The provisions contained in the present chapter shall not interfere with the exercise, in times of war or in case of national emergency, of the supreme powers which belong to the Emperor.

Article XXXII: Each and every one of the provisions contained in the preceding articles and of the present shall, in so far as they do not conflict with the laws or the rules and discipline of the army and navy, apply to the officers and men of the army and of the navy.

# The Meiji Constitution
# Analysis Sheet

Directions: Use a separate sheet of paper, if necessary, to answer the following questions.

## A. The Preamble

1. According to the Preamble, what is one of the most important historical characteristics of the Japanese?

2. According to the Preamble, who or what is the source of authority in Japan?

3. What is the importance of ancestors, as stated in the Preamble?

## B. The Emperor

1. List five of the emperor's powers.

2. Which article formalized the Japanese emperor as a godlike figure?

3. In the Meiji Constitution, did the emperor have more or less power than the president of the United States? How do you know?

## C. The Rights and Duties of Subjects

1. Which articles deal with the duties of the people? What are these duties?

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2. List five basic rights that the people of Japan enjoyed under this constitution.

3. Articles XXII through XXX list the rights of Japanese subjects under the Meiji Constitution. In how many cases in these articles is some limit or condition put on the exercise of these rights by the people?

4. What limit is put on liberty regarding residence? On freedom from search and seizure? On private property? On religion? On freedom of petition?

5. In general, subjects' freedoms in Meiji Japan were curtailed by what other goals?

**D. Conclusions**

1. From your analysis of the Meiji Constitution, what characteristics emerge regarding Japan's national government and national identity? That is, what were some of the cornerstones of government and nationhood in Japan at this time?

2. As reflected in the constitution, what makes Japan special or unique?

3. What is "Western" about this document? What seems uniquely Japanese?



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# 5 Education and National Identity

**Introduction:** Through the Constitution of 1889, the Meiji government had identified and brought together the key components and characteristics of Japan's national character in a formal, written doctrine of government. The Meiji government presented these to the world at the same time they presented them to the Japanese people.

One year later, the Meiji government issued the Imperial Rescript on Education. This brief document took the essence of political and social thought and Japanese national identity as expressed in the constitution and incorporated it into a policy of education and a pledge of individual dedication to the nation.

In this lesson, students examine the Rescript on Education as a national policy and as a tool for promoting national identity, patriotism, and political and social values in Japan. Students compare the goals and impact of the Rescript on Education to the goals and impact of the Pledge of Allegiance, a document serving the purpose of social education in the United States.

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the national values, traditions, and goals set forth in the 1890 Rescript on Education.

2. Compare and contrast the goals and impact of two national "oaths" used to promote patriotism and national values among young people in two cultures.

3. Discuss the role of schools in defining and promoting national identity and social norms.

**Time required:** 1 class period

**Materials:** Handout 5A

**Procedure:**

1. To introduce the lesson, have students think about and offer examples of how institutions use songs, slogans, and oaths to develop feelings of loyalty, group identity, and group pride. Focus on the school as an institution. Does your school have a school anthem and/or fight song? Review the words to the song. Ask students to articulate the purpose of the song. How does the song accomplish this purpose through its lyrics?

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Ask students to extend their thinking to consider whether and how nations accomplish similar aims. Explain that in this lesson, students will be exploring the message and goals of two nationally instituted school "pledges" or oaths, one which originated in Meiji Japan and one commonly recited in U.S. schools.

2. Offer students a brief background on the Imperial Rescript on Education, as provided in the Background Notes on page 107. Because it is brief, this information may be most easily provided as a brief lecture. Emphasize that school children memorized the oath. Several generations of Japanese students and teachers started the school day by bowing to a picture of the emperor mounted on the classroom wall and reciting the Imperial Rescript on Education. To begin formal school ceremonies, a school principal would conduct a formal reading of the Rescript on Education, often reading from a scroll-like copy he held with white-gloved hands. These practices continued until the doctrine was outlawed and the Japanese education system was reformed after Japan's defeat in World War II.

3. Ask students to comment on how the school ceremonies and rituals surrounding the Rescript on Education would have helped to create in young people a sense of allegiance to and reverence for imperial authority.

4. Distribute Handout 5A, the Imperial Rescript on Education, and review directions with the class. Students should read the document silently, underlining all the important values and characteristics of a good Japanese subject, as set forth in the rescript. They should also underline phrases which define the goals each Japanese subject should strive to achieve, and actions and behaviors Japanese people were expected to perform out of loyalty to the nation.

5. As a class, analyze the Rescript on Education, identifying and discussing the goals, values, characteristics, and behavior of Japanese subjects established through this oath. The Handout 5A Answer Key on page 109 and the following questions are provided to guide discussion.

- How did the Rescript on Education create an image of the nation of Japan as a large family with the emperor at its center? *Students should be able to cite repeated references to ancestors, filial piety, and family life.*

- What responsibilities did a Japanese subject have to his or her family? *To be filial, respect family and ancestors, and live harmoniously.*

- What responsibilities did one have to the state? *To pursue learning, advance the public good, and obey the laws and the constitution.*

- What was ultimately expected of all Japanese subjects in a national emergency? *To sacrifice their lives to protect the emperor and the nation.*

- Remember that the Rescript on Education was issued toward the end of the Meiji


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period, after several decades of very rapid modernization and change in Japan. Do you think the rescript was a document designed to promote change or stability? *Students should be able to cite repeated references to traditions and the standards set by ancestors as evidence of the conservative, stability-oriented character of the document.*

- Based on the tone and content of the Rescript on Education, what do you see as the Japanese government's attitude about Westernization at the end of the 19th century? *The rescript glorifies the past, traditions of ancestors, and the imperial line. There is an implicit rejection of Western ways in this glorification of Japan's past.*

- Based on the content of the Rescript on Education, what did the Japanese see as fundamental and unique about their own country? *Loyalty, filial piety, unbroken imperial tradition, traditions of ancestors.*

5. Solicit student reactions to the Rescript on Education. What might be the effect of reciting the rescript once a day or once a week throughout many years of schooling? How would memorization and recitation of the rescript promote a feeling of national identity, patriotism, and reverence for the emperor among young Japanese? Do students see such a measure as appropriate in schools? Why or why not?

6. Turn students' attention to an oath common in schools in their own country—the Pledge of Allegiance. Provide background on the Pledge of Allegiance from the Background Notes on page 107. Note that the pledge was first introduced in this country in 1892, just two years after the Rescript on Education was introduced in Japan. Focus class discussion around the following questions.

- What is the purpose of the Pledge of Allegiance?

- Why do school children memorize and recite it?

- How does this brief pledge instill patriotism and national pride?

- According to the words of the pledge, what is characteristic and unique about the United States?

7. Ask students to compare the two oaths. Do students see them as similar or different in content? In their objectives? How so?



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**Additional Resources:**

Ryusaku Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.

*Collier's Encyclopedia, Volume 10*, Number 39. New York: MacMillan, 1991.

Neil Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot?" in Akira Iriye, editor, *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.



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# Education and National Identity

## The Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890

The Rescript on Education was issued by Emperor Meiji in October 1890, about a year after the issuance of Japan's first constitution. The document was drafted by three Meiji statesmen, all of whom shared a commitment to creating a national identity which emphasized and idealized conservative Confucian values such as reverence for ancestors, reverence for tradition, filial piety (respect for parents and family), and respect for authority.

According to the Rescript on Education, the goal of education was to instill among young Japanese a sense of Confucian moral duty and respect for the emperor, society, and the family while promoting a sense of national tradition and heritage, national identity, and patriotism. The document was very conservative in tone, reflecting a reaction against the rapid modernization and Westernization of the early Meiji period and a desire to return to traditional Japanese values and customs.

Within months of the issuance of the Rescript on Education, the Meiji government sent copies of the oath to all schools in the country. From the 1890s through World War II, Japanese school children memorized and recited the Rescript on Education. School children began their day by bowing to a picture of the emperor and reciting the rescript with their teachers. The rescript was also an important part of school ceremonies. Standing beside a portrait of the emperor, school principals would conduct a formal reading of the rescript to begin important school functions and assemblies. After Japan's defeat in World War II, the Rescript on Education was repudiated by the government as an ultra-nationalistic doctrine.

## The Pledge of Allegiance, 1892

The original Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy and first appeared in the magazine *Youth's Companion* in 1892. It was used at the dedication of the World's Fair in Chicago on October 12, 1892. In 1923 and 1924, the wording of the pledge was altered at the first and second National Flag Conferences. Congress officially approved the Pledge of Allegiance on December 28, 1945. In 1954, the Eisenhower administration added the words "under God" to the Pledge. Many states require school children to pledge allegiance to the flag as part of daily or weekly school routines.

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# Answer Key for Lesson 5

**Handout 5A:**

**Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890**

Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted *virtue**; Our subjects ever *united in loyalty and filial piety* have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the *glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire*, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be *filial to your parents*, *affectionate to your brothers and sisters*; as husbands and wives be *harmonious*, as friends true; bear yourselves in *modesty and moderation*; extend your *benevolence* to all; *pursue learning* and *cultivate arts*, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and *perfect moral* powers; furthermore *advance public good* and promote common interests; always *respect the Constitution* and *observe the laws*; should emergency arise, *offer yourselves courageously to the State*; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the *best traditions of your forefathers*.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

*Italicized words and phrases indicate words students should underline.

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# Education and National Identity

**Directions:** As you read the following document, underline the following:

- important values and characteristics of a good Japanese subject;
- goals each Japanese subject should strive to achieve; and
- actions and behaviors Japanese people were expected to perform out of loyalty to their nation.

## Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890

Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety* have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

* filial piety: respect for family and ancestors

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Source: Ryusaku Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.

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# 6 Good Wife, Wise Mother: The Role of Women in Meiji Modernization

**Introduction:** When the Meiji government set as its goals the modernization of Japan and the international recognition of Japan as a civilized, industrialized nation, it also set about to develop policies and plans by which *every segment* of Japanese society would be mobilized to contribute to this massive modernization effort. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Meiji government had begun to put together a policy defining the roles of women in this modernization effort and in the new Japanese society.

In this activity, students complete a background reading on Meiji policy towards women and, through several case studies, explore ways in which the Meiji government mobilized women to play a prescribed role in meeting national goals. A companion activity, Lesson 7, explores the pivotal role of lower class women in Meiji industry.

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Describe the Meiji policy towards women.

2. Chart ways in which specific household activities by women contributed to the national modernization effort.

3. Analyze case studies to identify and discuss ways in which the ideal of "good wife, wise mother" served the Meiji goals of modernization and industrialization.

4. Apply their knowledge by solving hypothetical problems concerning appropriate life choices and social activities for women in Meiji Japan.

**Time required:** 1-2 class periods plus homework

**Materials:** Handouts 6A through 6D

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce the lesson by soliciting student knowledge about the roles and status of Japanese women now and through history. What do students know or have they heard about women in Japan? How do students think Japan's late 19th-century modernization and industrialization might have affected women? If students have studied U.S. history, ask for information about how women in this country participated in the industrial revolution.

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2. Assign Handout 6A and the accompanying retrieval chart, Handout 6B. The reading briefly outlines Meiji government policy towards women and government efforts between 1890 and 1910 to mobilize women to contribute *in prescribed ways* to the national modernization effort.

3. Discuss the reading and retrieval chart in class, using the Handout 6B Answer Key on page 117 as a guide. Specific questions to raise in discussion might include the following.

- What is the significance of the Meiji slogan, "good wife, wise mother"?
- How did the Meiji government see the "good wife, wise mother" as a contributor to society and to the national economy? *She raised good subjects, kept her family financially secure, took care of the old and sick.*
- To what socio-economic class of women did this ideal apply in Meiji Japan? *Middle and upper class women.*
- What was expected of lower class women? *That they contribute to the nation as industrial workers.*
- How did women's management of the home—specifically household savings, care of the sick and elderly, and raising of children—help the nation in meeting its goals? *It relieved the government of the responsibility and expense of this care. Family savings were used by the government to finance industry.*
- How did the government encourage women to accept and act upon this ideal? *The government held up role models of women from various social sectors who sacrificed for home, community, and nation.*
- In what specific ways did the three women profiled in the magazine fulfill the ideal of Meiji womanhood? *Sacrifice for family, hard work, care of sick, frugality, charity work.*

4. Distribute Handout 6C, excerpts from the autobiography of Baroness Ishimoto Shidzue, a young woman growing up in late Meiji Japan. Have students complete the reading as homework. An optional study guide is provided as the last page of Handout 6C and may be assigned to help students focus their reading.

5. Based on the autobiography of Baroness Ishimoto, conduct a class discussion to analyze how education for middle and upper class girls was structured to prepare them for adult roles as heads of households with specific responsibilities. The Handout 6C Answer Key on page 118 and the focus questions below may guide the discussion.

- How did education at the Peeresses' School mix Western and/or modern aspects


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with training in traditional aspects of Japanese society? *The building was Western-style; the students' uniforms were Western-style; students learned a Western curriculum including geometry and science, yet they also studied ethics, traditional arts, and other subjects that would prepare them for taking care of a family.*

- How, specifically, did ethics education prepare female students for their "good wife, wise mother" roles? *It taught them manners, etiquette, domestic arts, traditional arts, home management.*

- How did Ishimoto Shidzue feel about her education and the role that had been prescribed for her? *She thought her education was limited and criticized it; she was dissatisfied with the restrictions and limitations of a "good wife, wise mother."*

- What influence did the empress have on the girls at the Peeresses' School? *The empress was admired and respected as the "Mother of the Nation;" she was progressive, modern—a mixture of Western ways and Japanese aristocracy; she and the emperor were divine, sacred.*

6. To culminate the activity and evaluate student learning, students create a list of rules for success in Meiji Japan, then apply these rules to the solution of family, social, and economic situations which might have occurred during this period.

Based on the two readings and class discussion, ask the class to brainstorm a list of rules and guidelines—"dos and don'ts"—that would guide women toward appropriate and successful behavior in Meiji society.

Distribute Handout 6D or create an overhead transparency of this handout and project it for the class to see. Have students compare their brainstormed list of "dos and don'ts" with the list of rules provided in Handout 6D. Emphasize that this list is a *hypothetical compilation* from a variety of government documents and articles and that no such written list of rules existed.

7. Turn students' attention to the situations described on Handout 6D. Have students work in small groups or individually to formulate courses of action they think Meiji women might have taken in each of these situations. Compare answers in class; refer to the Handout 6D Answer Key on page 119.

8. In closing the activity, remind students that government policy towards middle and upper class women differed from their expectations for lower class women, although all were expected to contribute to the nation. The next lesson, on Meiji women factory workers, provides another dimension to the study of women's roles and contributions in Meiji society.

9. As an extension to this lesson you may ask students to conduct independent

research on contemporary women's issues in Japan. Explain that today there is still a sense of "good wife, wise mother"—these values and responsibilities are still important in Japanese society. Students might conduct research on "education mamas," women in the work force, or the role of contemporary women as heads of households in Japan. Students may also want to read about the 1993 marriage of Japan's Crown Prince to a young career woman, Owada Masako, and the changes such a marriage required in her life.

**Additional Resources:**


Marjorie Wall Bingham and Susan Hill Gross, *Women in Japan* (filmstrip, cassette, text, and teacher's guide). St. Louis Park, MN: Glenhurst Publications, 1987.

Joyce Lebra et al., *Women in Changing Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Jane Condon, *A Half Step Behind: Japanese Women of the '80s*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1985.

Shidzue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1935, (c) 1963.

Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Nina J. Easton, "Shinto Meets Chanel," in *The Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1993.

Bill Powell, "The Reluctant Princess," in *Newsweek*, May 24, 1993.





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# Answer Keys for Lesson 6

## Handout 6B, Part 1:

| Action/Characteristics | Contribution to Nation |
|---|---|
| Responsible for proper upbringing of children | *well-disciplined subjects* |
| Care of sick or elderly family members | *government free of social programs; more money for industrialization* |
| Frugality: contributing to government savings accounts | *government uses savings account money to finance industrialization* |
| Hard work in and out of home, when necessary | *contributes to work force and/or keeps family self-sufficient* |
| Charity and patriotic volunteer efforts | *helps war effort; keeps government expenses down* |

## Handout 6B, Part 2:

| Role Model | Care of sick/elderly | Frugality | Hard work/ endurance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yamasaki Ichi | *cared for blind father, insane mother, and her own sisters; later cared for sick husband* | | *did farm labor to be able to buy treats for family* |
| Taniguchi Kiku | | *never went home on school vacations; saved all the money she could have spent on these trips and deposited savings in postal savings account* | *worked to contribute to war relief* |
| Shibata Hana | *cared for sick husband; adopted abandoned girl* | *took many jobs; sold household furniture to stay self-sufficient* | *family was poor—worked for other families to raise money; once married, worked as day laborer to supplement her husband's income; supported self after husband died* |

**Handout 6C:**

1. What class of children attended the Peeresses' School? What were the social and educational goals of that school? *Children of the ruling class and families of high social standing attended the school. School goals were to prepare children of their classes for social and national leadership.*

2. Describe aspects of the Peeresses' School experience and its curriculum that could be described as Western influenced. *Western aspects: architecture, uniforms, courses such as Euclid (geometry), physics, chemistry, foreign geography, and history.*

3. What aspects of the school and its curriculum were more traditionally Japanese? *Courses such as calligraphy, ethics, etiquette; change to Japanese clothing by age 12.*

4. Through what courses and activities did the Peeresses' School teach upper-class Meiji girls to become "good wives and wise mothers"? *Courses in ethics, etiquette and manners taught loyalty, filial piety (respect for family and ancestors), modesty, reverence, ways of raising a family, etc.*

5. Consider the impression that the Empress of Japan made on the baroness as a high school girl. How, specifically, did the empress model an ideal of womanhood in Meiji Japan? *The Empress of Japan impressed Ishimoto with her blending of traditional Japanese manners and customs with Western, modern dress and some western manners. She also impressed upon the girls the unique history of the Japanese nation.*

6. In describing her transition to young adulthood, the young writer reflected some tension between Japanese and Western ways, particularly as they affected girls and women. What tensions did she identify in manner and customs and how did she and her parents see these issues? *Ishimoto wanted to wear Western clothes but her parents felt that she had passed that age and must wear a kimono. To Ishimoto's parents, Western styles reflected freedom and lack of discipline and were appropriate only as a phase before girls accepted their more traditional adult responsibilities.*

7. Ishimoto described the "good wife and wise mother" ideal as one that sounds acceptable in any society or age. Yet she protested that in Japan it was essentially an attractive slogan or "skin" hiding an unattractive and very traditional "fruit." Use Ishimoto's descriptions of the life awaiting her as an adult to create a drawing, cartoon, or caricature of the "skin" (outward appearance) and the "fruit" (inner reality) of womanhood in Meiji Japan, as Ishimoto saw it. *Answers/pictures will vary. See descriptions on Handout 6C for details.*



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**Handout 6D:**

**Situation A.** *If she were very loyal to the guidelines for a good Meiji woman, a housewife faced with this dilemma might have a) looked for additional work/income, and b) saved even more carefully. She would certainly have found a way to make the costumes so her family could have participated in the parade, even if it meant other sacrifices for the household.*

**Situation B.** *This was actually the situation for a group of Japanese girls sent to the United States for a Western education in the early Meiji period. One young woman, Tsuda Umeko, chose not to marry and instead, began her own school, which is now Tsuda College. However, a more loyal Meiji subject would have followed the guidelines, married, and raised a family.*

**Situation C.** *The dialogue for this situation might have the younger woman talking about reform and helping the factory girls, while her mother would undoubtedly pressure her to give up such radical ideas, support her family's factory because it is contributing to Japan's industrialization, and choose a quieter life as a wife and mother.*

**Situation D.** *This woman would probably have taken a job in a factory to support her family and contribute to the war effort. She also would have done charity work such as making bandages, nursing, and product drives.*

**Situation E.** *This young mother would have been careful to teach her preschool children discipline, obedience, respect for elders, love of country, hard work, and frugality.*



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# Women in Meiji Japan

An overarching goal of all government policy in Meiji Japan was to modernize and industrialize the country so that it could take a place as an equal nation among civilized nations of the world. This national policy had repercussions for the roles and expectations for women of the times.

## Westernization and Liberalization in the Early Meiji Period

In the early decades of the Meiji period, government and society experimented with liberal attitudes and customs regarding women, just as they experimented with so many aspects of society. For example, in the 1870s, the Meiji government sent five young girls to the United States for a Western education and upbringing; in 1873, the government mandated primary school education for all Japanese children, boys and girls.

In these early decades of the period, women—particularly those of the middle and upper classes—were caught up with society as a whole in adapting Western customs. Taking their lead from the Empress Haruko, women adopted Western-style dress and learned Western etiquette, manners, and even dance. Again following the lead of the empress, women of the upper classes became actively involved in charity and benefit work.

However, following two decades of experimentation, Japanese social, economic, and government policies came together in the late 1880s and 1890s around a mixture of traditional and modern values. In government policy, the emphasis by the 1890s was on preserving what was uniquely Japanese about Japan while adopting very selectively from the West to secure the status of a modern, civilized nation. Thus, for example, the Meiji Constitution of 1889 established a written blueprint for government, a national law-making body, and formal branches of government along Western models. But the substance of the constitution emphasized Confucian values, sacred imperial rule, social hierarchy, and deference to authority—all very traditional Japanese ideas.

## Government Policy Takes Shape, 1890-1910

By the 1890s, as other economic, social, and political policies began to coalesce, the Japanese government began to articulate a national policy towards women. This policy towards women was dictated by the larger goals of modernization and industrialization and was designed to insure fulfillment of those goals. Meiji statesmen grappled with the question of what role women could and should play in the national effort to industrialize, and they considered strategies to mobilize women to contribute positively to the state.

The Meiji government considered the question of women's roles as two policy issues—

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one defining the role of lower class women and the other outlining the role of middle and upper class women. Lower class women, particularly peasants from rural areas, were to be mobilized as workers in factories, particularly in the rapidly growing silk and textile industries.

Government policy towards middle and upper class women was based on two assumptions: 1) the family was the essential building block upon which the success and strength of the nation was built; and 2) as men went into the labor force, management of households was increasingly in women's hands.

As Meiji statesmen saw it, the family unit performed important functions that relieved the national government of social responsibilities which could drain government funds needed to finance industrialization. For example, women family members took care of the young, the old, and the sick. Moreover, the family was where young children were taught social responsibility and the acceptance of their proper place in society. Mothers had the most important role in raising disciplined, responsible Japanese subjects.

Two government agencies—the Ministry of Education and the Home Ministry—took leadership both in defining government policy towards women and in encouraging women to do their part. The Ministry of Education popularized a slogan to characterize and promote the ideals of Japanese middle and upper class womanhood. "Good wife, wise mother" focused women's attention on the home and emphasized the importance of women's contributions to the nation through their management of the household. The slogan was the rallying cry of a government campaign to define women's assets and focus women's attention on hard work, frugality, efficient management of the home, care of husbands and children as well as elderly and sick relatives, and charity work. Feminine virtues were defined as hard work (including, as with lower class women, work outside the home for wages when necessary), endurance, frugality, and filial piety (respect for family).

Frugality—careful spending and saving—was an important aspect of women's responsibility in the home and a vivid example of how effective household management served government goals. Japanese were strongly encouraged to live sparingly and to save money. Savings were to be deposited in government-sponsored savings accounts. Money invested for the long term in these savings accounts could then be used by the government to finance industrial development. Thus, a woman who ran a frugal household and was able to save money was contributing in very positive ways to the nation. She insured financial security for her family, relieving the state of this concern, and she helped provide a financial base for government-sponsored industrial growth.

Education became an important tool in government policy towards women: one way to insure that households had good wives and wise mothers was to educate young girls


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accordingly. With this in mind, the Ministry of Education enacted an 1899 law requiring the establishment of at least one higher school for girls in each prefecture. Unlike the higher schools for boys, which stressed academics, these higher schools for girls were dedicated to developing skills in traditional arts, etiquette, gentle and modest character, frugality, and diligence.

The Home Ministry acted as a partner to the Education Ministry in mobilizing women to contribute through their homes and families to the good of the nation. Among other strategies, the Home Ministry published a national magazine called *Shimin*, "The Subject." The magazine featured stories and examples of women who characterized the national ideals of womanhood. These women were to serve as an inspiration for others.

Three life stories from *Shimin* promoted ideals of Meiji womanhood.

**Yamasaki Ichi** of Saitama prefecture was the perfect model of filial piety. Her father had owned a mansion, agricultural fields, and a *sake* shop, but by the time Ichi was born he had become blind. Before Ichi was even twelve, her mother suffered a nervous breakdown. Ichi cared for her blind father, her younger sisters, and her mad mother. She married in 1891, but only five years later, her husband became ill. She nursed her husband and her father until their deaths, and continued to care for her unappreciative mother. The mother whined and scolded while Ichi did farm day-labor to supply her with sweets and sake; nevertheless, Ichi patiently informed her sympathetic neighbors that she would rather die than neglect her mother.

* * *

**Taniguchi Kiku** lived in the dormitory during her entire four years at Takamatsu Girls' High School, never once returning to her home. When other girls went home, Kiku recorded in a notebook what she would have spent on round-trip transportation; she then deposited that amount in the postal savings system. She married soon after graduation. When her husband departed for the front as a second lieutenant in the Russo-Japanese War, Kiku worked hard to save more than ever, and she was able to contribute ten yen toward war relief. She had enlisted the help of her high school principal in making her donation, and through him her virtuous actions became known to Governor Onoda, who wrote her a postcard in praise of her wartime contribution.



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* * *

**Shibata Hana** was born in 1857. Her family was very poor, and from early childhood she worked for other families to contribute to the finances of her father's household. In her twenties she married a fisherman's apprentice, Koikeri Torakichi. Hana supplemented her husband's earnings by continuing day labor and gathering firewood to sell. After ten years the couple was able to buy a fishing boat. Unfortunately, Torakichi was not suited to fishing and suffered a nervous breakdown. Within two years, the couple had lost all their property. Despite Hana's constant care and prayers, Torakichi's condition worsened, and he disintegrated into imbecility. Hana eked out a bare existence for them, using spare moments to gather firewood and take in laundry to pay for her husband's medicine. She had to care for her husband like a baby, even carrying him about on her back. To survive, she sold their furniture and worked while he slept. When in 1899 he finally died, her tears fell like rain. Thereafter, Hana's work as an agricultural day laborer and peddler of fish enabled her to live independently and entirely respectably. Since the couple had no heir to perform sacrifices for Torakichi's ancestors, in 1901 Hana adopted an abandoned three-year-old girl.[1]

A final part of being a good wife and wise mother was to contribute to the social good through charity and volunteer efforts. Upper class women conducted charity fundraising balls. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, women were called upon to assist the war effort by providing care for soldiers, fundraising, and making household donations.

Japanese society has undergone many changes since the Meiji period. Today, the legacy of the "good wife and wise mother" is still felt and seen in Japan. Most women believe that their most important role is that of mother; their principal tasks in this regard are insuring that their children succeed in education. While more and more women are taking jobs outside the home, a majority still leave work when they have their first child, returning to the work force only after their children are grown. Also of note, Japan still has one of the highest savings rates in the world.

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[1]Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910," pp. 165-167, in Gail Lee Bernstein, editor, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Excerpts reprinted with permission.


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**Sources**

Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910," in Gail Lee Bernstein, editor, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Marjorie Wall Bingham and Susan Hill Gross, *Women in Japan*. St. Louis Park, MN: Glenhurst Publications, 1987.

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# Retrieval Chart

**Part 1.** Using the reading in Handout 6A, complete the chart below, describing how each of the attributes of a "good wife, wise mother" listed below contributed to the national welfare and to Meiji government goals of industrialization.

| Action/characteristics | Contribution to Nation |
|---|---|
| Responsible for proper upbringing of children | |
| Care of sick or elderly family members | |
| Frugality: contributing to government savings accounts | |
| Hard work in and out of home, when necessary | |
| Charity and patriotic volunteer efforts | |

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**Part 2.** Complete the chart below to describe how each of the three female role models profiled in *Shimin* magazine fulfilled the Meiji ideals of "good wife, wise mother."

| Role Model | Care of sick/elderly | Frugality | Hard work/ endurance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yamasaki Ichi | | | |
| Taniguchi Kiku | | | |
| Shibata Hana | | | |



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# Education of a "Good Wife and Wise Mother"

*Note: Baroness Ishimoto Shidzue was born in 1897 into a wealthy Japanese family. She was educated during the first decades of the 20th century (the final years of the Meiji period) at a time when the national ideal of women in Japan—particularly middle and upper class women—had been defined by the government as that of "good wife and wise mother." In spite of this education, Baroness Ishimoto became a leading Japanese feminist in the early and mid-20th century, championing rights of female mine workers and birth control. Her book* Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life *was published in 1935 in New York. It is the story of Japan's transition from the feudalism of the Tokugawa period to the industrialism of Meiji and 20th century Japan, as experienced by Ishimoto. In the following excerpts from* Facing Two Ways, *Ishimoto presents the story of her education to become a "good wife, wise mother."*

**Kindergarten and Primary School—Feudal Discipline at the Peeresses' School**

Like Eton College in England, the Peers' School in Japan has its significance in educating the younger generation of aristocrats. As soon as the great wave of political upheaval seemed settled, in 1877 the Emperor Mutsuhito commanded a department of the imperial household to establish the Peeresses' School, laying stress upon the importance and peculiarity of character building for the class which was to be the leading force in the nation. . . . Ten years after the Peers' School was founded, the Empress Haruko expressed her intention of providing education for the girls of the ruling class. This she carried out in the Peeresses' School, beginning with a kindergarten where small boys and girls played together. The late Emperor Taishō, the Empress Dowager, the present emperor and empress all began their studies in this institution, and many young royal princes and princesses are attending it at present. It is almost a rule for the peers to send their sons and daughters here, and a few children from other families of high social standing are also allowed to enter this school.

I started my schooling at the kindergarten of the Peeresses' School, when I was five years old. Little boys and girls of aristocratic birth were brought to this kindergarten carefully protected by their servants, some wrapped in soft silk quilts and riding on the nurses' knees in the *rikishas*, as if their parents were afraid even a soft wind might kill their little ones. . . .

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Excerpted from *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* by Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto. Copyright 1935, (c) 1963 by Shidzue Ishimoto. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Co., Inc.

I spent two years in this kindergarten; then I was old enough to enter the first grade in the primary section of the Peeresses' School. This meant that I and the other little girls were separated from our boy friends, whom we have never had a chance to study with again or even to see. But the thought that such and such men of distinction today were the little boys who often cried in the playroom at the kindergarten, at my side, is some consolation. . . .

Our main school building was a red brick two-storied structure in Victorian style—the Victorian style was ravenously copied in the early Meiji period—with the gilded double cherry blossom, the coat of arms of the school, engraved on the front door. A wooden building, also of Western style, which had much wider windows and surrounded a court, supplemented the main building.

Each class in the primary section consisted of thirty-five girls, about half of whom had come up from the kindergarten. In the classroom each girl sat on an individual chair with a square wooden desk before her, while the teacher took his or her seat on the platform in front of a large blackboard. Those who spent eleven years together in this school, from the kindergarten through the primary and high school course, came to have a feeling of real sisterhood since the Peeresses' School was the only place of learning for the girls of this class. Among my classmates were the present Viscountess Toshi Matsudaira, Marchioness Tame Tokugawa, Marchioness Aya Matsudaira[1], all of whom are the wives of prominent nobles. There were four princesses, three girls from marquises', four from counts', ten from viscounts', and four from barons' families. Others were the daughters of high officials, prominent businessmen, and other important people in Japan. . . .

**High School Years**

At the age of twelve, I finished the primary course in the Peeresses' School and entered the high school in the same compound, which was supposed to correspond to the boys' middle school. In reality there was a distinct difference between the two in the standard and character of learning. Boys were taught and trained to be "great personalities;" girls were first and foremost taught to become obedient wives, good mothers and loyal guardians of the family system. This discrimination was not calculated to encourage girls to independent thinking. Women were not expected to be pioneers in any enterprise.

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[1]In this autobiography, written for a large English-speaking audience in the 1930s, Baroness Ishimoto chose to use the English-language order for names. Thus, given names appear first, family names last, throughout this reading.


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The five years' education in the girls' high school was looked upon as the grand finishing course, so that few girls remained at school for postgraduate work. Arithmetic, algebra, Euclid[2], physics, chemistry, national and foreign geography and history were taught, but we were only allowed to peep into the world of science and did not spend much time or energy on any one of the more approved subjects. Japanese literature, both classical and modern, covered the largest part of class assignments, for as a matter of fact well-educated Japanese citizens had to learn at least four or five thousand Chinese ideographs, most of which are pronounced in three or four different ways and written in at least three styles. A vast amount of attention had to be bestowed on these. Besides this strenuous memory work, penmanship, painting, drawing, music, sewing, embroidery and cooking were taught in both the Western and the Japanese manner. The girls were kept quite busy.

Even penmanship for the Japanese is no trifle. A woman cannot marry into a good family if she reveals a sign of low breeding in her handwriting. And men will experience disadvantages in getting positions unless their handwriting is good. When distinguished men travel and stay overnight in a hotel or a country inn, they are always pestered by the host for specimens of their handwriting. The innkeeper will bring white silk or rice paper and an instrument as big as a club, asking them to write some lucky verses or seasonal sayings—a note of distinction in comparison with the scribbled signs of others in the guest book! Their calligraphies will be mounted and put on the wall in the guests' rooms. Nor does penmanship mean writing with a pen. Japanese writing is done with a brush and actually it is sensitive painting, even when the brush is enormous. The artistic quality of Japanese writing reveals the personality of the writer as much as a painting does that of the artist, so that it cannot be entirely replaced by the convenient typewriter.

At school, therefore, we spent hours and hours bending over our desks and white sheets of rice paper, in our hands big and small brushes which we dipped in India ink, writing Japanese characters, stroke by stroke, trying to present graceful and dignified ideographs. . . . In the classroom we had the printed models of calligraphy and carefully imitated each stroke and each shape of a letter. The teacher came round the room, commenting on each girl's work and correcting it with his red brush. No sound except his soft footsteps was heard throughout the hour. The students were intent on learning this sacred art and breathless over the movement of the brush. Not satisfied with the classwork, most girls went to the teacher's house for private tutoring. . . .

Another lesson, rather unpopular among the girls, was ethics. In this class we were taught that loyalty and filial piety are the chief and fundamental morals, that our conduct

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[2]geometry



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should be directed to expressing our sense of gratitude to the emperor as obedient subjects, and to parents and ancestors as faithful daughters. At the Peeresses' School, the girls recited these precepts every morning before the lessons, saying, "We girls in the Peeresses' School shall respect the imperial family, and try to be model subjects loyal to the emperor and the empress. . . ."

A Westerner might consider this ritual a religious exercise, but it was not that. It was a ritual of Shintoism, which is rather the cult of the state. . . . This ethics class at our school was relied upon for character building. Its substance lay in the Confucian teachings emphasizing loyalty to the ruler and duty to parents. We were brought up to think frequently of our obligations to our elders and to the emperor. We were taught what "we ought to do and to be," but never did we discuss questions of personal freedom and independent thinking or the right to be guided by one's own conscience. A familiar proverb said: "Good medicine is bitter to the mouth: so is good advice to naughty ears." Naturally the girls disliked these preachings, pounding again and again on tired ears.

To reinforce these moral obligations we were given lessons in "manners and etiquette," that we might be disciplined in modesty and reverence. Our school had a separate house, built in pure Japanese style, for instruction in etiquette. It had a mat floor and an alcove in which the essential ornaments were placed in strict accordance with the prescriptions of the Ogasawara School of Etiquette. We took off our shoes before we entered the house and sat rigid on the mats. We learned formality of every possible kind, such as wedding and funeral ceremonies in both Shinto and Buddhist styles, the reception of guests, and entertaining or being entertained at table. The complexity of this instruction was such that we had to practice, for instance, sitting and standing positions, and three forms of bowing: to elders, to equals, and to inferiors. As in everything else in Japanese life, these three different social degrees were taken into account. A most circumscribed way of living!

To entertain and to be entertained at table was an affair of the most agonizing maze of rules. A formal dinner in the Ogasawara style requires the correct use of two or three soup bowls, five to nine dishes, a sake cup, and a rice bowl, all lacquered black outside and red inside, served on three to five different lacquered trays, with ponderous dignity even though the actual food they contain is unsubstantial. Every movement in handling the chopsticks and bowls, in eating and drinking, was prescribed for us, in its proper order too, even to the approximate number of grains for a mouthful of rice! We had to learn how to train the servants: their manner of carrying trays, walking on the mat floor, and sitting to offer sake or rice. In the etiquette practice-hall we girls sat absolutely silent and took part by turn in this ceremonious play, characteristic of endless leisure and calling for limitless patience. And we were as serious as if life consisted solely of formalities which, if carefully preserved, leave nothing more to be desired. Indeed, knowledge itself could be nothing but formality to us who were to take it from the voice of authority as the infallible guide for the


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movement of the mind. We were never to criticize or doubt it.

Japanese culture has long rested on the silkworm. So great is its importance as a national asset that empresses have patronized it at court and noblewomen still learn to care for the tiny creatures. What in former days was a creative art has become a cult. When the season came for raising silkworms, the girls at our school, therefore, practiced feeding them and watching the entire process of silk production, from digestion to the soft white raw material outcome. . . . Once a year we were taken to inspect a silk factory where we saw tens of thousands of the silvery cocoons boiled and untwined into silk thread by the clever hands of the factory workers, whose fingers were blistered from working in hot water all daylong. None of the small aristocrats in the Peeresses' School in those days ever thought of the problems of working-girls. Instead, we felt deep gratitude to our ancestors and parents for the fact that we were not born into poor families whose daughters were destined to lead a miserable life.

When my classmates got into the high school grades, usually at the age of twelve, they felt very grown-up and ladylike and began to wear kimonos with long sleeves. Even the dressing of their hair was different now. Girls in the grammar school wore short hair, but when they were ready for the high school they began to let their hair grow so that soon they could wear a high puff in front, with colorful ribbons on top of the puff, letting the rest of their long hair hang down the back tied with white cords. The longer their shining black hair, the prouder the girls were of it, and often ties came down to the back of their knees. A long-sleeved purple silk kimono, a red cashmere skirt that reached the heels and black Western shoes formed the most prevalent style for the students at the Peeresses' School. . . .

. . . [A]thletics as well as ethics and art had recently become a part of our curriculum. And members of the court themselves came to see us perform our exercises. Great preparations were made for their arrival. All around the wide playground were hung thick, black and white curtains as in the war camp of a daimyō. There was a temporary pavilion with reed screens and purple crepe draperies, bearing white imperial crests dyed on the front. On the platform floor of this pavilion was spread a scarlet carpet. A square table covered with gorgeous gold and red brocade stood on it, and a chair of black and gold lacquer. This was the temporary throne for her Imperial Majesty Haruko, wife of the great Emperor Meiji. Next to this pavilion was another set slightly lower and containing seats for the royal princesses.

When Her Majesty and her retinue arrived, the Imperial Navy Band greeted them with the National Song. The empress was led into the grounds by the principal of the school, Madam Shimoda, who was dressed in a heavy black silk kimono with a skirt of the same color. The royal princesses, daughters of the Emperor Meiji, followed Her Majesty. We were deeply stirred by this noble and beautiful imperial procession. . . .

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On the day of this exhibition the Empress Haruko was dressed in a European costume approved by the Emperor Meiji as the court apparel to be worn on all occasions except those connected with the Shinto sacred rites. She looked beautiful to us in this Western costume, her bonnet trimmed with a large white ostrich feather and a veil, her hands sheathed in long white kid gloves. The ladies-in-waiting were dressed in a similar manner, but the four young princesses wore embroidered kimonos in the pure ancient imperial style, the coloring of which was all according to the color regulations instituted about a thousand years ago when Japan produced a highly cultured society centering around the imperial court. The princesses, who were in their teens, wore kimonos of peach, green, scarlet and purple, respectively, with big peonies, storks, bamboo, turtles and holy clouds embroidered on them in gold and rainbow hues. Over the kimonos they wore red or grape-colored hakama-skirts of taffeta of the ancient court styles like hoopskirts, and they walked in little silk shoes of the old court style. Their hair, dressed in the imperial style, hung down their backs without ornament, but the straight shining mane added to their youthful distinction. Seated in the pavilions, our royal guests watched our athletic exercises from beginning to end: Swedish gymnastics, graceful minuets and square dances with orchestra accompaniment, and maple hunting—a dance with purely Japanese music. About six hundred girls from five to seventeen took part in the events of the day. The senior class conducted a Red Cross drill which was quite militaristic, for it was designed to show their skill in bandaging wounded soldiers and carrying them on litters from the field to the camp. . . .

The girls felt proud of their opportunity to perform in the presence of Her Imperial Majesty. She was to them a gracious mother, and indeed we called her "The Mother of the Nation." She sat on her throne motionless except for an occasional smile as she watched this ingenuous play. Sometimes she smoked her golden pipe, respectfully offered by a young lady-in-waiting, who filled it each time from a gold lacquered tobacco box. Every time she accepted her pipe, she lifted her veil to smoke it—it held just enough for three short puffs. Looking back through the years, I can see that the Western manners adopted by the progressive young Emperor were not wholly incongruous with the graceful, etiquette-loving nature of Japanese aristocracy.

These athletic meetings, which the empress honored with her presence, occurred at the time of commencement and at the anniversary celebration of the founding of the school. . . . For at least two hours all the girls had to stand in straight rows on the wide space in front of the school gate, waiting for the imperial procession. It was finally heralded by mounted horse guards, who preceded the imperial carriage. Mounted troops of the imperial guards, carrying the scarlet flag of the empress, enlivened the procession. Its dramatic point was, of course, the magenta-colored carriage in which the empress sat alone on the back seat, a lady-in-waiting of the highest rank facing Her Majesty, in a bent position, on the front seat, each holding a white lace-trimmed parasol. We were signaled to begin bowing slightly when the imperial flag came in sight, and to continue our bows, making



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them lower and lower, until Her Majesty had passed before us. The girls longed to see and worship Her Majesty's noble face, but we were not allowed to look up in the imperial presence. The empress remained an exalted mystery.

The emperor and the empress are divinities to the Japanese, and those who had received special favor from the imperial household felt more deeply the divine grace of Their Majesties. Being homogeneous in racial traditions, we are one big family in the island empire with the imperial rulers at the head. How could a girl like myself, born in the Meiji era, when the restoration of the emperor was the main political excitement, and reared under its spell, fail to be moved by the spiritual force which the emperor symbolized?

**The Obedient-Wife-and-Wise Mother Principle and Artistic Culture**

"You should not wear your Western clothes any more, Shidzue," said mother one day. "They are proper for a little child in the playground, but they look too childish and undignified for a grown-up girl like you. Don't you realize that you are to prepare to be a good and beautiful bride soon?"

I loved my Western dresses which my father had brought back from London and was allowed to wear them until I was twelve years old for playing out of doors. When I was only nine, however, mother gave me a purple *obi*-sash that was stiffly padded and lined so that I could never wear it until my maid had tied it in a big bow at my back. I longed for a peach or a red sash without a lining, but mother was definitely determined to train my body to endure all the uncomfortable stiffness of Japanese clothes. She thought that loose Western dresses and free outdoor play would spoil the dainty looks of her daughter and so even Saturday afternoons or Sundays, which were the only days free from school lessons, she insisted on my being suitably dressed and occupying myself with lessons in flower arrangement, and in the tea ceremony.

In spite of the tide of liberalism that had been breaking over Japan with the new social order, influencing literature, men's education and other aspects of culture, the women's world remained true to the conception which survived from the feudal age.

"A good wife" and "a wise mother"! How well these words sound! Indeed, there could seem to be no objection to them in any society or age. But when we peel off the skin from this perfect fruit of feudalism, we expose bondage to husbands and subjection to the tyranny of the family system as a whole. Consciously or unconsciously my mother taught her daughter to crush her desires and ambitions, and trained her to be ready to submerge her individuality in her husband's personality and his family's united temper.

Girls were to study first of all how to please their husbands' parents with absolute

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obedience. Mother never thought it possible that I should become a good companion, discussing social problems or politics with my husband or reading books with him. She was not worried about the plight of women or the state of the nation but thought it of the greatest importance that she should educate me in such a way that I might not be criticized. She did not wish me to be the sort of girl who did not fall in with the ways of her husband's family. Time and again she told me that this was her greatest anxiety about me. And indeed she could not help this attitude. The possibility of divorce was involved. Unwillingness or inability to conform to the ways of her husband's family was enough excuse for any husband or any mother-in-law to send a bride back to her parents disgraced for life as a "divorcée."

In the April of my seventeenth year, the commencement of my class was held at the Peeresses' School. The girls were delighted with the honor of receiving their certificates of graduation in the presence of Her Imperial Majesty the Empress Sadako, the present Empress Dowager. Each name was called by the dean and each of us stepped forward in turn to the front of the gorgeous imperial throne, making three bows to Her Majesty and receiving the certificate handed out by General Viscount Oseki, successor to General Nogi as president of the school. The certificate of thick rice paper, mounted on silk brocade into which was woven the imperial chrysanthemum and paulownia designs, contained words exquisitely written in a mixture of Chinese and Japanese letters. It took some time for the fifty-nine girls to receive their certificates individually, but the empress patiently watched them, always with a gracious smile on her noble face.

After the ceremony was over and all the receptions and parties were closed, the girls gathered here and there under the big cherry trees in the school grounds, drenched in the raining petals and in tears over the sorrow of leaving the school where they had spent fifteen years, day after day together enjoying their carefree youth. Their tears were those of girlish sentimentality, but also of fearful anticipation of heavy responsibilities soon to be forced upon them.

Marriage for the Japanese girl meant losing individual freedom. She was allowed to peep into the romantic side of marriage through classic stories such as *The Tale of Genji*. The few books selected for us to read treated of the romance of court life in ancient times. But what the teachers preached in the classroom about a woman's morals, and the repeated words from our mothers' lips, made us aware that a step out from the school gate was a step into the woman's destiny of subjection, where every girl's lot was inevitably cast. Three of my former classmates were already married, having left school when they were sixteen. One of them was already a mother. There were also a few who were engaged to be married very soon. Those marriages and engagements were arranged by their families regardless of the girls' individual interests. Little Princess Tame Shimazu had been engaged to Marquis Raitei Tokugawa, and her sister had been engaged to the heir to Prince Tokugawa since babyhood in the cradle. Romance may come after an engagement of this kind but never before, as such



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girls have no opportunity whatever to know boys other than their relatives.

On leaving school, my life changed entirely. A few of my classmates remained in school to take the postgraduate course, but the parents of most of us thought too much education spoils a woman's precious virtues—obedience and naïve sweetness—and that awakening one's individual desire is the seed of unhappiness. My parents shared this conventional opinion so I was to keep myself busy with flower arrangement, tea ceremony, cooking and sewing, besides my lessons in English and the piano with foreign tutors. Mother trained me to be capable of every possible kind of domestic work. I got up at five every morning and worked in the gardens, both front and back, helping the servants. I swept the ground with a bamboo broom, printing, as I did so, dainty lines on the soft earth. I trimmed the bushes, branches and leaves of the trees according to the rules for gardening. I watered the garden paths, the rocks which were scattered here and there under the trees and the irregular stepping stones all over the garden. All the rocks and stones had to be washed, and the trees had to be well sprinkled with water. Moss and lichens must shine with a fresh verdure against the early morning sun rays. In the late afternoon this watering was repeated for all the gardens. . . .



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# Education of a "Good Wife and Wise Mother" Study Guide

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions as you read the Baroness Ishimoto's biography.

1. What class of children attended the Peeresses' School? What were the social and educational goals of that school?

2. Describe aspects of the Peeresses' School experience and its curriculum that could be described as Western influenced.

3. What aspects of the school and its curriculum were more traditionally Japanese?

4. Through what courses and activities did the Peeresses' School teach upper-class Meiji girls to become "good wives and wise mothers"?

5. Consider the impression that the Empress of Japan made on the baroness as a high school girl. How, specifically, did the empress model an ideal of womanhood in Meiji Japan?

6. In describing her transition to young adulthood, the writer reflected some tension between Japanese and Western ways, particularly as they affected girls and women. What tensions did she identify in manner and customs and how did she and her parents see these issues?

7. Ishimoto described the "good wife and wise mother" ideal as one that sounds acceptable in any society or age. Yet she protested that in Japan it is essentially an attractive slogan or "skin" hiding an unattractive and very traditional "fruit." Use Ishimoto's descriptions of the life awaiting her as an adult to create a drawing, cartoon, or caricature of the "skin" (outward appearance) and the "fruit" (inner reality) of womanhood in Meiji Japan, as Ishimoto saw it.


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# Guidelines for Meiji Women

1. Get a good education so that you can take care of your home and teach your children.

2. Marry for the good of your family.

3. Serve your husband and family.

4. Your household is your first priority; households are the building block of the nation.

5. Live frugally; save money.

6. Take care of elderly or sick parents and other family members.

7. Teach your children to be good Japanese subjects.

8. Be modest and uncomplaining.

9. Contribute to charities.



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# Being a "Good Wife, Wise Mother"

For each of the situations below, decide what a woman living in 1890s Japan would do to fulfill the Meiji ideals of "good wife and wise mother."

A. You and your family live in a village outside of Tokyo. Your village is famous for an annual spring festival for which the local townspeople make elaborate costumes and conduct a parade. Although your family is not poor, they are not well-to-do either. You face a dilemma as the festival approaches: If you are to make costumes for your family, it will take a great deal of the family budget for the month and may even eat into your savings. What will you do and why?

B. You are one of five young women whom the Meiji government sent to the United States for a Western-style education in the 1870s. Now, after six years, you have returned to Japan. Many traditional customs seem strange to you. In the United States you have learned to be fairly outspoken; as a visitor you were often asked to express your opinions and reactions to life in America. Now, back in Japan, you find that your parents are pressuring you to marry, but you would like to pursue a career in education. What will you do and why?

C. You are the oldest daughter of a wealthy family. Your father owns a large textile company which is an important component in Japan's industrialization. On one of his business trips to the factory town, your father takes you along. The conditions in the factory are terrible—cramped space, terribly hot, dirty. You see girls your own age working long hours in these conditions. You are very upset with what you see. Create a dialogue between you and your mother over this situation.

D. It is 1904 and Japan has recently entered into war with Russia. As the wife of a middle class man who has gone off to fight in the war, how will you take care of the family and contribute to the war effort in his absence?

E. You are the mother of a young son and daughter who will soon be ready to go to the local primary school. Describe how you will prepare each of these children for school attendance. What will you do at home to make sure each child is ready for school and knows what to expect?


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# 7 Female Factory Workers and the "Meiji Miracle"

**Introduction:** From 1868 to 1912, Japan transformed itself from an agricultural, isolated island nation to an industrialized world power. All of Japanese society was mobilized to support the fast-paced modernizing effort. Women, no less than men, worked to bring about change in the Meiji period. Regardless of social class, women contributed to the fulfillment of the Meiji government's goal of making Japan a modern nation.

This lesson focuses on the women from Japan's lower economic classes who made up the bulk of Japan's factory workforce in the Meiji period. Female workers—young girls of impoverished rural families—entered factories at an early age to serve their families, their country, and, not incidentally, the profit motive of factory owners. In this activity, students will analyze 19th century factory songs to explore their influence in shaping an industrial workforce. Through workers' songs, students will examine female worker dissatisfaction with factory life and analyze some of the social costs and benefits of Japan's "Meiji Miracle."

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe the "Meiji Miracle" as Japan's industrial revolution in the Meiji period.

2. Recognize the role female factory workers played in Japan's rapid industrialization.

3. Examine the role of factory songs in shaping a compliant workforce, willing to sacrifice for family and country.

4. Analyze factory workers' songs to determine the impact on female workers of Japan's rapid industrialization.

5. Design a poster reflecting the social and economic perspectives of either mill owners or mill workers on industrialization and mill conditions in Meiji Japan.

**Time required:** 1-2 class periods plus homework.

**Materials:** Handouts 7A, 7B, 7C; posterboard and markers



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**Procedure:**

1. Review with students ways in which the government mobilized Japanese society to modernize Japan during the Meiji period. (See preceding lessons in this unit.) Explain that in this lesson, students will learn about the tremendous contribution made by lower class women to that modernization effort.

2. Distribute Handout 7A, Female Factory Workers and the Meiji Miracle, as background reading for this lesson. Students may read the handout as homework or as an in-class activity.

3. After students have read the background material, ask them to discuss or write answers to the questions on the final page of the handout. Using the Handout 7A Answer Key on page 145 as a guide, review and discuss the reading.

4. Tell students that factory owners, in order to boost worker morale and productivity in the 1880s and 1890s, taught women employees company songs to sing while they worked. Distribute Handout 7B, Factory Songs. Ask students to read the songs to themselves, then aloud with a partner. After reading the songs, have students write answers to the questions for discussion. Discuss their answers as a class. See the Handout 7B Answer Key on page 145 for possible student responses.

5. Tell students that factory workers created their own songs to sing while working in the mills. Distribute Handout 7C, Workers' Songs, and ask students to read the songs to themselves, then aloud with a partner. Ask students to compare worker songs to factory songs. After reading the songs, have students write answers to the questions for discussion. Discuss student answers as a class, using the Handout 7C Answer Key on page 146 as a guide.

6. As a culminating activity, ask students to imagine that they are workers in a silk or cotton mill in Japan in the 1880s. Divide the class into small groups. Assign groups to represent either the mill owners or female factory workers. From their assigned perspective, have students create either a mill owner poster encouraging sacrifice and discipline from the factory workers or a poster outlining factory workers' demands for better working conditions. In creating their posters, urge students to make use of visual images created by the songs they have analyzed previously.

7. Ask each group to present its poster; display posters in the classroom. Discuss the conflict female factory workers may have felt between their duty to family and nation and their need for better treatment.

8. To conclude the lesson, instruct students to take the role of a female factory worker in Meiji Japan. Students may then write a letter to their families at home describing their working situation in the mill and the conflict they feel between duty owed to their country and family and their personal desire for better treatment at the hands of the mill owners.

**Additional Resources:**

Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983.

Patricia E. Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

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# Answer Keys for Lesson 7

**Handout 7A:**

1. Why did textile mills seek out peasant women for factory work? *Factory owners sought peasant women as textile workers because they were used to doing hard work; their parents were willing to let them work in mills because they were desperate for additional income.*

2. What price did poor women pay in developing Japan's textile industry? *Factory work ruined women's health; women were exploited by factory owners; women were poorly paid for the exhausting labor they were required to do; factory women suffered from tuberculosis at a much higher rate than did the majority of Japanese people during the Meiji period.*

3. What is meant by the "Meiji Miracle?" Do you think it could have been achieved without the work of women? Why/why not? *The "Meiji Miracle" refers to Japan's rapid industrialization during the Meiji period, including the development of modern industry and a modern military. Women's work was essential to Japan's modernization—the number of women working in factories indicates the importance of women to Japan's modernization; profits from textile exports helped finance Japan's modernization.*

**Handout 7B:**

1. What do you think was the purpose of the factory songs? *The factory songs appealed to the workers' sense of patriotic duty, as well as their duty to family. The lyrics, provided by the company, encouraged hard work and self-sacrifice from the workers.*

2. What feelings were the songs designed to promote among the factory workers? *The songs were intended to promote feelings of patriotism and willingness to do one's duty for family and country.*

3. What was meant by the line, "we are soldiers of peace?" To whom were the factory women being compared? *The line "we are soldiers of peace" compares the factory women to "soldiers of war"—the army. Just as the Japanese army served Japan, factory women provided a similar, vital service to their country.*

4. If you had been one of the young recruits to the spinning mill, how would these songs have made you feel about your contribution to your country? *The songs might have made one feel that the long hours, hard work, and miserable conditions were necessary hardships worth enduring for the sake of family and country. Such a contribution might have made one feel that she was making Japan a great and prosperous nation.*

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**Handout 7C:**

1. What do the workers' songs express about life in the factories? *Life in the factories was lonely and wretched. The workers felt overworked, imprisoned, and bitter. They worked long hours, their health was destroyed, and they were badly treated if they tried to escape.*

2. How did the purpose of factory life described in these songs compare to that described in the factory songs? Did these workers believe they were sacrificing themselves for a worthy cause? *Workers knew they were sacrificing themselves for the profit of the company, and did not believe this was a worthy cause.*

3. Create a title for one of the workers' songs, and explain why you chose that title. *Answers will vary.*



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# Female Factory Workers and the "Meiji Miracle"[1]

At the beginning of the Meiji period, cheap cotton thread from the West accounted for 35 percent of all imports to Japan. By the end of the period, Japan dominated world cotton manufacturing, and was the world's leading exporter of silk. The Japanese government reinvested profits earned by these exports into other industries, helping to transform Japan from a preindustrial nation to an industrialized and militarized country by the end of the Meiji period. Japan's era of rapid industrial and economic growth—often called the "Meiji Miracle"—was achieved through the huge efforts of the government, private industry, and factory workers, many of whom were young women from poor farming families.

The Meiji government laid the groundwork for Japan's industrial revolution. From the early 1870s on the government served as the principal developer, funder, and importer of modern industrial technology. The government promoted industry by establishing model factories in the 1870s that produced a core of skilled factory workers, managers, and technicians. The government also modernized and expanded Japan's transportation, communication, and banking systems, all of which were essential to the development of a modern economy. With government sponsorship and encouragement, the number of factories and private industries rose sharply; between 1890 and 1900 Japan's factory production doubled; by the turn of the century Japan had established itself as the first non-Western industrial capitalist economy.[2]

How did young rural women contribute to Japan's industrial revolution? Like women throughout the world, Japanese women have traditionally made significant contributions in labor. For the majority of peasant families in the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), survival was not possible without women and their work. Rural women were expected by their villages and families to be diligent, productive workers. These women planted, tended, and harvested rice alongside their husbands, fathers, and sons; they grew cotton and hemp to make clothing for their families; they cared for the very young and the very old, as well as the sick and injured in their families; they prepared and preserved food, and gathered fuel for

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[1]Adapted from Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983; and E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

[2]Peter Duus, *The Rise of Modern Japan*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976.

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cooking and heating. In short, rural Japanese women of the peasant class were used to hard work.

The Meiji government, seeking a profitable export commodity to help finance Japan's modernization, saw these hardworking women as a key to industrial development. Through the domestic production of cotton and silk, Japan could combat its trade imbalance with the West and gain a steady source of income for building industry and the military. In 1872, the government opened Japan's first modern silk reeling mill in Tomioka, designed as a model factory where Western-style techniques would be taught. In this early period of industrialization, the Tomioka Silk Mill initially employed and trained hundreds of daughters of the former samurai class to serve as leaders of the next wave of textile workers and to promote mill work as a patriotic service to Japan. At Tomioka, early recruits worked a relatively short 9-12 hour day, lived in a spacious dormitory, ate substantial meals, and received medical care. Upon completion of this training, the "students" went off to work in silk mills in their regions.

With government encouragement, the number of silk-reeling factories increased rapidly. By 1879, 665 mechanical silk reeling plants were located throughout Japan. Cotton manufacturing followed suit; by the mid-1880s, Japan's modern cotton-spinning industry was well in place. The innovative Osaka Cotton Spinning Factory led the industry in many areas: it was the first textile factory to institute the night shift, operating its machinery 24 hours a day; it was the first to install electrical lighting to prevent the fire dangers associated with gas lamps. By 1884, it saw huge profits—31.6 percent in that year alone.

In the 1880s, textile manufacturing conditions changed in Japan, and so did the type of laborers hired to work in textile industries. The changes were spurred on by competition from abroad: French and Italian silk manufacturers modernized their equipment in the 1870s and the 1880s, thereby boosting productivity and lowering costs considerably. To compete in the international silk market, Japanese mill owners lowered wages for their workers and began to hire young women from poverty-stricken families in rural areas. Along with lower wages for these new recruits came longer working hours, fewer rest periods, and the odious night shift.

The daughters of impoverished families were obvious recruits for the mills: parents who could scarcely afford to feed their children saw the added income from a daughter as a godsend. As the demand for textile laborers increased, factory recruiters combed the countryside, urging parents to sign their daughters to a one- to five-year contract in a distant mill. The recruiters described working conditions there in glowing terms: the girls would receive free room and board, medical care, frequent days off, and time for recreation. The factory would be a "home away from home" for these young women. To seal the deal, recruiters offered the family an "advance loan," paid in cash. Most poor rural families could


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not resist this last enticement, suffering as they were from an increased tax burden under the Meiji government. What the parents did not comprehend was that they were essentially selling their daughters to the factory. Mill owners subtracted the advance loan from a worker's wages; to pay back the loan, a girl might work all year and earn nothing. Failure to fulfill her contract would mean a severe penalty to the family, which would have to pay back the advance loan with interest. Not wanting to destroy her family or increase its economic burden, the girl was forced to fulfill her contract to the mill.

Working conditions in the mills deteriorated rapidly in the 1880s, as mill owners implemented cost-cutting measures. The average workday in Japan's textile industry at the end of the 19th century was 12 to 13 hours, broken by two 15-minute meal periods. As mills instituted the night shift, some women were required to work 24- or 36-hour shifts if local replacement workers did not arrive for the night shift. Dormitories, where workers from distant regions lived, were overcrowded and unhealthy; workers there were guarded so that they would not try to escape. Diseases such as tuberculosis were an industry-wide problem, the result of long hours, poor nutrition, and a hot, humid working environment. Despite recruiters' promises to parents, health care was minimal, and workers were under such pressure to remain on the job that they rarely received medical attention for illnesses and injury. Death rates among factory workers were much higher than for the general Japanese public during the Meiji period; nearly 25 percent of textile mill workers suffered from tuberculosis.

Female factory workers did not quietly accept the increasingly inhumane conditions under which they worked. In the summer of 1886, workers at the Amiyama Silk Mill in the city of Kofu staged five walk-out strikes protesting unfair treatment by the mill operators. Their chief demands were for improved working conditions, shorter hours, and an end to the many regulations and fines forced upon workers for minor infractions of the rules. The results of their walk-out were mixed: the management agreed only to think of "other ways to improve conditions." Still, the workers' collective action marked the beginning of an organized labor movement in Japan.

By 1902, roughly 80 percent of employees in Japan's cotton-spinning industry were female; in the silk reeling industry, 94 percent of workers were female. Overall, from 1894 to 1912, the women of Japan's impoverished countryside made up 60 percent of Japan's industrial work force. According to historian Sharon Sievers, this figure is unmatched in any other industrial nation. "In no society," she writes, "has the proportion of women workers reached the 60 percent that Japan averaged in this critical period."[3] At the end of the Meiji

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[3]Sharon Sievers, op. cit.

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period, the result of their labor was apparent: women had made Japan the world's leading exporter of silk; by 1914, Japan dominated world cotton manufacturing. The profits earned by these two industries helped to make Japan a world power in the short period of time from 1868-1912. The "Meiji Miracle"—the spectacularly rapid development of modern industry and a modern military in Japan—would not have been possible without women.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Why did textile mills seek out peasant women for factory work?

2. What price did poor women pay in developing Japan's textile industry?

3. What is meant by the "Meiji Miracle?" Do you think it could have been achieved without the work of women? Why/why not?



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# Factory Songs

Young spinning factory recruits left their homes in Gifu prefecture, crossing the snow-covered Nomugi Pass on foot to reach the mill in Nagano prefecture, where their "new life" was about to begin. Some were children, only 11 or 12 years old. They would leave at 3:00 in the morning, and by the time they reached Yamaguchi village, the February snow would be so deep they would have to walk single file. From the front of the line, where someone would be carrying a company flag, a cheerful voice could be heard singing:

We don't cross Nomugi Pass
just for show.
For ourselves, for our parents.
For men, the army.
For women, the mills.
Spinning thread is for the
country too. (Tsurumi, p. 92)

Once girls reached the factories, companies provided uplifting tunes and lyrics for them to sing while working, like the two songs printed below.

Raw silk, reel, reel the thread.
Thread is the treasure of the empire!
More than a hundred million yen worth of exports,
What can be better than silk thread?

* * *

Factory girls, we are soldiers of peace.
The service of women is a credit
To the empire and to yourselves.
There are trials and hardships, yes,
But what do they matter?
Put all your strength into your work.
It's for yourself, it's for your family,
It's for the country of Japan. (Tsurumi, p. 93)

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Songs reprinted from Patricia E. Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*. Copyright 1990 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What do you think was the purpose of the factory songs?

2. What feelings were the songs designed to promote among the factory workers?

3. What was meant by the line, "we are soldiers of peace?" To whom were the factory women being compared?

4. If you were one of the young recruits to the spinning mill, how would these songs have made you feel about your contribution to your country?



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# Workers' Songs

Factory workers created their own songs to sing while working in the mills. As you read the workers' songs, compare them to the factory songs. Consider the message and the mood of these songs. Then, answer the discussion questions on page 2 of this handout.

On rainy days and at night,
I think of home.

The factory closes and I return to the dormitory,
To think of home where frogs croak at night.

Is it the misty valley or just the steam from the silk?
Is it the temple bell on a sunny day or just the noon bell?

Looking out at the growing darkness,
I recall the evening bell at Takayama Temple.

When my term expires I'll cross the Nomugi Pass
And they'll say, "Our daughter is home!"

When the double yellow rose blooms,
I am beckoned home via Nomugi.

Autumn is lonely, overwhelmed by turning leaves.
In the moonlight I long for Hida.

As I go toward my home,
I look back at the hateful chimneys. (Tsurumi, p. 101)

The following song was sung by a cotton mill worker.

In the midst of mountains everybody knows,
Where the sound one hears is the sound of waterfalls
One finds the Fuji Cotton-Spinning Company of Suruga.

I came here as a punishment for defying my parents.
Now I toil at Suruga,
Never to defy my parents again.

People come to Suruga,
Thinking they will save money,
But one cannot make any money here.

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Songs reprinted from Patricia E. Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*. Copyright 1990 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

We don't sleep at night, we work the evening shift.
Our life spans are shortened.
All of us are wretched, all.

Someday I'll tell my parents back home
The bitter tale of the factory;
And move us all to tears.

Though the regulations are unjust,
This factory was built on regulations
And, if they are broken it's an offense.

I long to quit and go home,
But there is no return without train fare.
With tearful eyes I watch the railway line.

Stealthily I creep to the gate
To be abused by the gatekeeper.
Weeping, I flee to the dormitory.

The full moon is in the shadow of the clouds,
My parents in the shade of the mountains;
And I in the shadow of the factory's cotton.

Don't sneer at us
Calling us "Factory girls, factory girls!"
Factory girls are
Treasure chests for the company. (Tsurumi, p. 159)

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What do the workers' songs express about life in the factories?

2. How did the purpose of factory life described in these songs compare to that described in the factory songs? Did these workers believe they were sacrificing themselves for a worthy cause?

3. Create a title for one of the workers' songs, and explain why you chose that title.

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Songs reprinted from Patricia E. Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*. Copyright 1990 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.


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# 8 Japan Takes a Bow on the World Stage: The 1893 World's Fair

**Introduction:** The world's fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries provided an international meeting place for the great powers and emerging nations. Government-sponsored exhibits from all over the world showcased the best of each nation's artistic, scientific, and technological advances. The first world's fair was held in London in 1851; the United States hosted its first fair in Philadelphia in 1876.

The Japanese government sponsored official exhibits at both the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. In this lesson, students learn about the phenomenon of the world's fair in the late 19th century and examine Japan's official exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair to understand Japan's evolving sense of identity in the late Meiji period. In so doing, students review and culminate their study of change, modernization, and the development of a national identity in Meiji Japan.

**Objectives:** At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Understand the significance of the world's fair as an international cultural phenomenon in the late 19th century.

2. Predict what items Japan might have sent to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

3. Compare actual items from Japan's official exhibit to the student-generated list of hypothesized items.

4. Analyze the Japanese exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair as a reflection of Japan's evolving sense of identity in the late Meiji period.

5. Review and synthesize their knowledge of the Meiji period.

**Time required:** 1-2 class periods

**Materials:** Handouts 8A, 8B, 8C; Slides 8A, 8B, 8C; slide projector

**Procedure:**

1. Through discussion, review with students the principal changes in Japanese society during the Meiji period. Ask students to consider the following questions.

- What were the goals of the Meiji government in the 1870s? Had Japan achieved those goals by the end of the period? If one of the goals was to win the respect of the Western nations which had forced Japan's opening in the 1850s, had Japan done so by 1893?

- Ask students to recall Japan's early goals and slogans for modernization in the Meiji period, then list Japan's progress toward achieving those goals. *Student answers should include:*

| ***Goals/Slogans*** | ***Progress*** |
|---|---|
| *Bunmei Kaika (Civilization and Enlightenment)* | • *established constitutional government*<br>• *established education system* |
| *Fukoku Kyōhei (Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Army)* | • *developed strong military*<br>• *established trade with Western powers* |
| *Shokusan Kōgyō (Encourage Industry)* | • *built an industrialized economy*<br>• *built railroad and communication systems* |

2. Tell students that during the Meiji period in Japan, the world's leading nations held international exhibitions, or world's fairs, to which countries sent official exhibits of artistic and technological products. Some items were available for purchase by fairgoers. Share with students that in this lesson they will learn about world's fairs and about Japan's participation in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

3. Distribute Handout 8A, World's Fairs. Ask students to read the handout for background information about international exhibitions and to answer the questions for discussion at the end of the reading. Review reading questions briefly in class.

4. Distribute Handout 8B, descriptions of Japan's contributions to the Chicago World's Fair. The first quote is by American observers and writers Joseph and Caroline Kirkland; the second quote is by Japanese writer Gōzō Tateno.

5. Based on the quotes, the background reading, and the student responses to procedure step 1, ask students to predict what kinds of items they think Japan would have sent to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. What do students think Japan would have exhibited to win the admiration and respect of the Western powers? Record student responses on the board. *Students will probably think of Japan's modernization and cite such things as: new technology, including weaponry, cotton spinning and silk reeling machinery; Western-influenced art, clothing, household goods. Alternatively, students may draw and present their conception of Japan's exhibit.*


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6. Read to students (or distribute) Handout 8C, the paragraph entitled "Japan at the Chicago World's Fair." Then, using the slide script provided on pages 159-160, show the three slides of Japan's Hōden, or Phoenix Hall.

7. After showing the slides, have students compare the images of the Phoenix Hall as Japan's central exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair to their predictions. Are students surprised by the Phoenix Hall exhibit? How does it compare to what they expected Japan to send to the fair? How is it similar/different to what they predicted Japan would send? *Possible answers include: The Phoenix Hall exhibit highlighted Japan's past and traditional culture. Instead of showing off its modernization, Japan chose to exhibit traditional architecture and art.*

8. Remind students that by the time Japan sent items to the Chicago World's Fair, it had been undergoing nearly three decades of rapid modernization. Ask students to think about the following question:

- What does Japan's main exhibit at the world's fair reveal about what it meant to be Japanese towards the end of the Meiji period? Direct students to form a hypothesis about Japan's sense of national identity in the early 1890s; ask students to cite evidence from their study of the Meiji period to support their hypothesis.

9. Ask students to present their hypotheses aloud. As a class, discuss student hypotheses. *Students may suggest the following ideas about Japan's sense of identity:*

- *Japan had accomplished so much that it could look to past eras with pride.*
- *Japan could afford to see traditional arts as worthwhile and valuable after an era of successful, rapid change.*
- *Japan was rejecting Westernization and displaying items that were truly Japanese to show a new sense of national pride.*
- *Japan was taking a more conservative, selective approach to modernization, mixing and adapting Western models with successful aspects of Japanese culture.*
- *Japan felt a sense of self-confidence, and wanted the rest of the world to realize that Japanese traditions were unique and great.*

As a class, try to achieve consensus on Japan's sense of identity in the 1890s.

# Slide Script for Lesson 8

**Slide 8A: Front view of the Hōden, or Phoenix Hall, Japan's main exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair.** Okakura Kakudzo, Director of the Tokyo Fine Art School, wrote the official guidebook to the Hōden. The following is a portion of his description of this building:

*Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*

> The Ho-o-den (*sic*), or Phoenix Hall, which has been erected by the Imperial Japanese Commission, and will be presented to the city of Chicago at the close of the Exhibition, derives its name from its representation of the fabulous bird. This bird, to use a figure of speech, has flown swiftly over the wide Pacific Ocean, bringing with it works of art from its native land, which though comparatively insignificant, may, it is hoped in some degree contribute to the beauty of the World's Fair.[1]

The building was shipped to Chicago in pieces and assembled on the grounds of the exhibition by Japanese workmen, who used traditional Japanese building techniques to fit the pieces together. No nails or modern tools were used. The Hōden, the centerpiece of Japan's effort at the fair, was a replica of a sacred Buddhist hall built in 1052 A.D. outside Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital. The three wings of the replica were each furnished and decorated to represent a specific historical period in Japan's art and architectural history. The paintings and furnishings in each room were meticulously re-created by Japanese artists to show to visitors the beauty and significance of traditional Japanese art forms.

Describe the building's style. Why do you think the Japanese government sent this building as its main exhibit to the fair? *The building is an example of traditional, Chinese-influenced Japanese architecture. It is a graceful, decorative wooden structure. Japan may have sent this building to show the beauty of its traditional forms of art and architecture, and to demonstrate its impressive traditional building techniques.*

Americans were tremendously impressed by the Hōden and by the traditional building techniques employed by the Japanese workmen who assembled the building. The Hōden remained in Chicago after the fair, as a gift to the city from the Japanese government. American architects, especially Frank Lloyd Wright, who lived and worked near Chicago, were influenced greatly by the Japanese style of architecture seen in the Hōden. Wright designed many houses that reflected the influence of Japanese architectural design.

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[1]Okakura Kakudzo, *The Ho-o-den: An Illustrated Description of the Buildings Erected by the Japanese Government at the World's Columbian Exposition, Jackson Park, Chicago.* Tokyo: K. Ogawa, Publisher, 1893.

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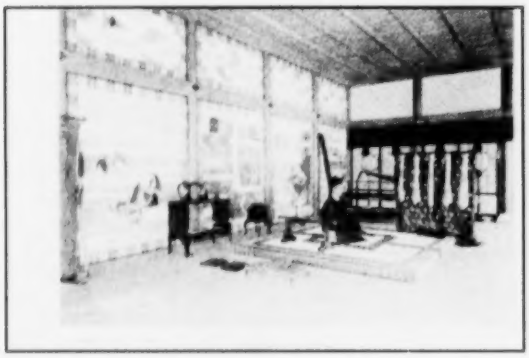
**Slide 8B: Interior of left wing of the Hōden.** The following description of this room is excerpted from Okakura Kakudzo's guide book:

> The left wing of the Ho-o-den (*sic*) here erected is constructed in accordance with the architectural features of the Fujiwara Period (880 to 1150 A.D.). In buildings of this period the ceilings were often partitioned into segments filled with relief sculpture depicting flowers, birds, or other objects. The room itself is modeled after the apartment of a courtier of high rank.[2]



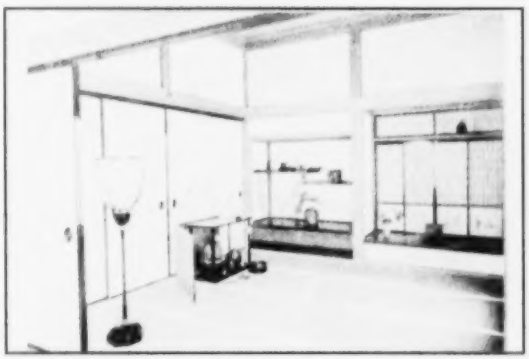
*Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*

Special features of the room include:

- raised *tatami* mat floor in the center of the room—the mats were made of reed and edged with brocade;
- *kichō*, a screen or curtain to shut out drafts and secure privacy;
- *waki-iko*, an arm-rest; and
- traditional-style paintings on the walls by artists from the Tokyo Fine Art School.

**Slide 8C: Tea room in right wing of the Hōden.** The following description is again from the official guidebook:

> The right wing of the Ho-o-den (*sic*) is in the style of the Ashikaga period (1350-1550 A.D.), during which artists were influenced by China, and particularly by Zen Buddhism. Simplicity of treatment is apparent, but it only affects the surface; internally much care and finish characterizes the work. The tea room is used for performing the *cha-no-yu* (tea ceremony) where all the accessories are specially noted for their simplicity of taste.[3]



*Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*

Describe the use of space and decoration in this room. What is the overall impression? Imagine sitting in the middle of this room. How would you feel? *The room is sparsely decorated, almost bare. The decorations—lamp, window coverings, and lacquer ware—are simple in design. The overall impression is of simplicity. Sitting in the room, one might feel peaceful, quiet, unhurried, but maybe not terribly comfortable: there are no chairs.*

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[2]Ibid

[3]Ibid


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# World's Fairs

Japan's Meiji period coincided with the era of great international exhibitions, or world's fairs. The first international fair, "The Great Exhibition of the Works of All Nations," was held in London's newly completed Crystal Palace in 1851 and was intended, said organizer Prince Albert, to be "a true text and a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived."[1] London's exhibition launched a succession of elaborately planned and staged fairs, all of which served as arenas for the display and purchase of manufactured goods, art, machines, and other items intended to show the degree of modernization and advancement each exhibiting nation had attained.

Following London's immensely successful (and profitable) fair, exhibitions were held every two or three years, in cities such as Dublin, Paris, Moscow, and Vienna. Host cities tried to outdo the previous fair in the architectural splendor of exhibit halls and the number of exhibiting nations in attendance. Great powers and emerging nations sent official displays which, they hoped, would showcase their industrial, technological, and cultural achievements.

The United States hosted its first world's fair in Philadelphia in 1876. The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition celebrated the United States' centennial year, and attracted exhibitors from all over the world. The Japanese government sponsored an official exhibit that year; it was the first time that many Americans had the opportunity to see Japanese arts and crafts and architectural design. The Japanese exhibit promoted an interest among wealthy Americans in purchasing Japanese art and craft items. New inventions displayed at the exhibition included Alexander Graham Bell's telephone, the first sewing machine, and the first practical typewriter.

Chicago served as the site for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Remembered today as the Chicago World's Fair, the huge exposition commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. It followed on the heels of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, whose centerpiece had been the just-completed Eiffel Tower. The exhibition halls built especially for the Chicago fair were elaborate and ornate, meant to suggest a neo-classical Florentine style of architecture that would demonstrate Chicago's sophistication. Instead, critics such as renowned Chicago architect Louis Sullivan complained that the architectural choice for the exposition would set American architecture back a half century.[2] The fair grounds were commonly called "The White City" because

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[1]John Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1977, p. 8.

[2]David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976, p. 304.

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electric light bulbs lit up the fake marble exhibition halls at night to create a fantastic, glowing image.

The fair's transportation building held a number of modern marvels from around the world, and it was one of the highlights of the Chicago fair. Visitors to the fair could see railway displays from England, France, Germany, Canada, Mexico and the United States. Included were exhibits of the Pullman Company's most luxurious New York and Chicago Limited Express coaches, the latest automobiles, and a full-size cross section of a modern transatlantic ocean liner over four stories high with a fully furnished interior. During the fair's planning stages, many suggestions had been made for an exhibition feature to rival the Parisian Eiffel Tower of 1889. G.W.G. Ferris settled the issue with his immensely popular gigantic revolving wheel which would carry fair-goers high above the exhibit grounds and give them a bird's eye view of the fair.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What was the purpose of the world's fairs in the 19th century?

2. What kinds of items did countries send to these fairs, and why did they send these items?



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# Observers Comment on the Japan Exhibit

American observers Joseph and Caroline Kirkland wrote that the Japanese exhibits "all arranged faultlessly and displayed with the peculiar smiling self-confidence which marks the [Japanese] seemed to say, 'We belong to you; we have something to teach as well as something to learn.'"[1]

The Japanese writer, Gōzō Tateno, described Japan's exhibits at the Columbian Exposition as "one means of proving that [we] have attained a position worthy of the respect and confidence of other nations."[2]

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[1]Joseph Kirkland and Caroline Kirkland, *The Story of Chicago* (Chicago, 1894), as quoted in Akira Iriye, *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.

[2]Gōzō Tateno, "Foreign Nations at the World's Fair," *North American Review* (January 1893) as quoted in Neil Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot? Japan at American Fairs, 1876-1904," in Akira Iriye, *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.

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# Japan at the Chicago World's Fair

Through its displays at world's fairs, the Japanese government saw a tremendous opportunity to mold its international image. Preparations for the Chicago World's Fair were a nationwide effort. Planning began in earnest in 1891 when the Japanese emperor appointed a commission to supervise the nation's preparations for the official exhibits. In each of Japan's prefectures, local committees were formed to examine and advise potential exhibitors. In all, 1,750 tons of exhibit materials were shipped to Chicago, more than was sent by any other exhibitor except Great Britain.

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# R Resources on Meiji Japan

**Teacher Background Resources**


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